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# THE STORY OF MY LIFE





AS COLONEL OF THE 4TH ROSIORI.

# THE STORY OF MY LIFE

BY  
MARIE,  
QUEEN OF ROUMANIA

*VOLUME II*

ILLUSTRATED



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*Let your love for life  
be your highest hope and  
let your highest hope be  
our highest thoughts of life.*

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# *Part Three*

## *EARLY WEDDED DAYS*



## Chapter I

### WELCOME TO BUCAREST

THAT was a long journey. Away from home, away from all that had been, away, away, through a wintry world to an unknown land, to a life unknown.

Frost and snow, and at heart an intolerable ache that would not become less.

My husband, happy to have me at last all to himself, kept me jealously away from any of our followers. I was his now and no one was to break in upon our solitude.

The King of Roumania had sent us his private carriage, it was heated well and we were very comfortable, but it was a long journey and the days too seemed long.

I should have liked to see Lady Monson, to call her in occasionally and talk to her, of home, of those left behind, but Nando would not have it. I also had a vague impulse to talk to the woman who had been attached to me as lady-in-waiting, Madame Grecianu. She had a motherly face, her voice was gentle, she would perhaps have been able to reassure me a little, give me advice, something about what would be expected of me "down there," for it was thus that I designated the country I was going to; "down there," and the term was as hazy as the conceptions I had about it.

Nando was too much in love to explain things to me: his attitude of the moment was to let well alone, trouble would come soon enough. He was never very good at explaining; he was always somewhat vague in his expressions. Later I often wondered if he saw things in pictures as I did. It is impossible to get inside another's brain—and there are some who have not the faculty of putting things clearly before you, they cannot find the words which make things concrete.

I had the feeling that I needed an anchor somewhere,

something stable and absolute upon which I could lean, even if it was only a precise picture, something my mind could lay hold of.

Perhaps Madame Grecianu could have given me this, but Nando, since the Vacarescu tragedy, had lost his faith in people: he had become painfully suspicious and was on the defensive even against those who were attached to us. This attitude on the part of my young husband did much to make our early years difficult and painful; he trusted no one and felt that isolation was my only safety.

Besides Colonel Coanda, the A.D.C., the King had named a certain General Robescu as head of our household. King Carol's household was almost entirely military and this is a tradition we have kept up. When I became Queen many years later, instead of having a gentleman-in-waiting, I had an A.D.C.

General Robescu, unlike most Roumanians, was a fair man with blue eyes. He hid a kind heart under a supercilious air. This was the gentleman who had not been able to win my father's confidence. Although he showed no special talent as organizer of our household, he nevertheless served us faithfully for many years and was still with us when my husband came to the throne. But there was something ironical and off-hand about him which made him a somewhat disconcerting personage to a young woman of my age and education. He seemed to take nothing seriously and was inclined to scoff at my perplexities, never giving me the feeling that I could really lean upon his advice, simply because he would not admit my difficulties. He might have been fatherly, but just missed being so. He had a truly Latin turn of mind to which in those days I was in no wise accustomed and was uncomfortably inclined to be ironical about one's dearest beliefs. He made one's most cherished principles appear comic or worthless. Often he was really witty, but it was a form of wit to which my Anglo-Saxon nature was instinctively hostile. "There are many men who feel a kind of twisted pride in cynicism," said Roosevelt, and such a man was General Robescu.

Our journey was to be interrupted by an official visit

at Vienna where we were to pay our respects to the old Emperor.

King Carol held Franz Joseph in high esteem and was also personally much attached to him. At that time Austria was still a centre of great power and political machinations. King Carol kept in close touch with the Ballplatz and his own policy was strongly influenced by Vienna's different humours. We were to feel this all through our youth. Uncle above all was a politician ; politics were his ruling passion, I can even say the only real passion of his life, and politicians in those days took themselves immensely seriously. To him the great game of politics was a game of such huge, overpowering importance, that all things were sacrificed to it, as we soon learnt to our cost. Being a zealot in what concerned his convictions he was therefore also a past master in the art of making himself obeyed even by the most recalcitrant and stiff-necked.

Now that the glories of that proud, imperial, "most Catholic" court, with all its pomp and magnificence, its archaic etiquette and restrictions, have passed away, as through all ages all earthly vanities pass away, I regret that I remember so little of that visit.

I was at that uncomfortable age of shyness and self-consciousness when all interest centres round one's own person, when one's eye sees nothing but the very evident and one's ear hears next to nothing, simply because one does not understand.

I have a very hazy remembrance of the old Emperor, slim, smart, a perfect figure though a little bent from the shoulders, carrying his head rather low, very polite, but not animated nor talkative ; and a less hazy one of the beautiful Archduchess Maria Theresa, wife of the Emperor's eldest brother, who helped to do the honours of the state banquet, the Empress being, as in later years was mostly the case, absent from the capital. There must have been many other members of the Imperial family, but I remember none of them except tall, stately, gazelle-eyed Maria Theresa and Archduke Otto, brother of Franz Ferdinand who was assassinated at Serajevo. Otto was father of the young Emperor Karl whom revolution dethroned after the World War, Franz

Ferdinand's children not being considered *erbfähig*. Being at all times a lover of beauty, I remember these two merely because of their good looks. In a family of tall but heavy-featured men Otto stood out, a handsome exception. I remember, however, murmurs about the loose life he led and of how unhappy he made his wife, Marie Josepha, sister of the last King of Saxony. In those days I was very vague about what was meant by a "loose life," but I looked with special interest at Otto because of all the whisperings which inevitably accompanied his name.

The table was one mass of beautiful flowers and superb gold plate; we ate off exquisite, rare old china; there was excellent music and a great deal of light. I cannot remember what the dining-hall was like, but I *do* very painfully remember a huge black grease-spot on my delicate pink dress; I was indeed more conscious of this black spot on my dress than of anything else that evening, including the Emperor himself. It was while getting out of the Imperial carriage that my dress was spotted, and both Lady Monson and Madame Grecianu spent their evening in bemoaning this fact so that the odium of that unfortunate stain should not fall upon my carefully chosen trousseau.

Curiously enough, although King Carol was so partial to Vienna, this was the one and only visit we were ever allowed to pay to that court. As will be seen later, *der Onkel* was exceedingly averse to our travelling about; curiously enough, he set no value on the personal touch. His successor was to marry well; Roumania's ambition was that their future queen should be closely connected with all the ruling royal houses of Europe; our marriage had therefore been considered exceedingly advantageous, but as far as I was concerned no profit was made of these advantages, because through the long years whilst we submitted to King Carol's rule, I was very rarely allowed to go anywhere or to keep personally in touch with my crowned relatives. It was, in fact, each time a painful tussle to obtain the smallest permission to go anywhere except to visit our own parents. Whenever we tried to break through this rule there was what I can only rightly describe as a "hell of a row," though I would not have dared use such an expression in

the great man's presence. Besides, he did not understand English. . . .

But I must hurry on, though I am at times inclined to pause, as though taking breath, knowing the ordeals that lie before me ; in thought I live them all over again one by one. . . .

The crucial hour was approaching. We had reached Predeal, then the frontier between Roumania and Hungary. Flags, guards of honour, music, crowds, cheers. Officials in *fraques* and top-hats made speeches, whilst the military band continued to play the National Anthem, drowning their voices. Hundreds of peasants had come from neighbouring villages with their schools ; the din was tremendous, the many faces made me giddy. Nando and I stood at the window looking down upon these eager, noisy manifestations which were repeated at each station along the way. It was bitterly cold and the peasants, men and women, were muffled in greatcoats embroidered in many colours, the women had veils or coloured handkerchieves on their heads : they fascinated me ; I had eyes only for these quaintly clad people, so different from anything I had ever seen. All the world over a bride is a person of great interest, so thousands of eager faces stared up at me, thousands of shining eyes consumed me ; I was horribly shy and very awkward about accepting these over-loud, hearty but confusing manifestations of joyous welcome. I was absurdly self-conscious, had no ease of manner nor *savoir-faire*. Nando helped me as best he could,—he was more at home, but he was not fond of official receptions.

Looking back upon myself as I was then, is as looking back upon a rather shadowy, very timid and exceedingly silly younger sister in whom I find none of myself to-day. Slim, with fair, unnecessarily frizzled hair, the blue eyes of a confiding child, awkward, unassertive, seeking a stable point in others as I found none in myself ; credulous, impulsive, unprepared for troubles and difficulties, I must have looked exactly what I was, an innocent little fool with a head stuffed full of illusions and dreams.

From across the years I feel like stretching out a helping



hand to that fair wraith of myself. From my knowledge of to-day, reaped through many years of struggles, I should like to call out a word of warning; I am almost horrified when I remember how confident, how unprepared I was. Having kindly feelings towards all men, my belief in others was unlimited, no mistrust lived in my soul, "there was no guile in me." And there I was setting out on a thorny road full of pitfalls, and no one there to say "look out," no one to explain that life was a bitter reality, not a dream, that "good intentions pave the way to hell," that confidence in others and a glorious optimism that all is well in the best of worlds is a fine thing but not always safe. But each man must work out his own salvation; it is only by living that we learn to live. Another's experience seldom helps us; step by step we must fight our own battles, solve our own difficulties, scramble out of the holes and traps into which we fall. My mother's experience could not be mine, nor mine my children's. We are one and all solitary wanderers in spite of the love we meet along the way. . . .

"We shall be arriving in half an hour, you had better dress." Nando's hand was on my shoulder, it trembled slightly; he felt the ordeal I was to go through. He bent down and kissed me, but he made no recommendations: recommendations would have been no good; I could not even have heard them because of the over-loud beating of my heart. . . .

So I dressed—I put on the fine clothes Mamma had so lovingly chosen for her daughter's entry into her new capital. A willow-green velvet dress, over which I was to wear a long mantle of violet velvet shot with gold and lined with white fox which had such a large white collar that my head all but disappeared in it, and to crown all a wee golden toque studded with amethysts, but so ridiculously small that it lay almost buried in my fair frizzled fringe which my maids had specially curled for the occasion.

Two maids had been attached to me, an English one and a German. The German was new to me and had been carefully selected as an elderly trustworthy person who could be helpful to such a very young wife. Although short

and plump she was called Louise Lang (Long). This worthy person was almost painfully tidy and much inclined to slow pomposity. Her hair was severely drawn back from her forehead, she enunciated her words with precise correctness and nothing could shake her out of her consummate perfection. Being an ardent Roman Catholic, church played a preponderant part in her irreproachable life, so great a part indeed that, when two years later we took up our residence in a palace just beyond the limits of the town, she shortly afterwards left me as she could not, because of the distance, go to daily Mass. Louise Lang curiously resembled a robin, as she was very round in front and had bright eyes that looked out over a nose comparable only to a neat and rounded beak. Being self-righteous this prominent nose was carried "high," although there was nothing vainglorious about little Louise Lang.

Louise Andrews—for they lacked originality and had the same Christian name—was quite another type. Thin, pale, her eyes were deep set, her mouth firm, her appearance austere. If not quite as painfully tidy as her German colleague she was just as irreproachable, and what was a rare occurrence, it was the Englishwoman who spoke German instead of the other way round, which is more usually the case. The two Louises did not live long enough together to become bitter enemies. If I describe them so minutely it is because maids are destined to play a rather large part in a lonely royal lady's life.

Now that I was ready, I felt as though dressed up for the sacrifice. Mamma had said: "Clothes play a great part all over the world and more especially in Southern countries, so never forget to dress carefully for festive occasions, it belongs to a princess's duties."

I stood there in the glory of my new attire thinking over her words. She had also said this: "You are going to an Orthodox country, respect its Church and its ceremonies, kiss the Cross and the Bible when the priest holds them out to you, and when you see others crossing themselves, do you the same." And I followed her advice, although at first each time I did so I nearly died of timidity, believing, with some reason, that all eyes were fixed upon me.

Oh, all those eyes eternally upon you ! That is indeed one of the biggest trials I had to learn to bear. Thousands of eyes everywhere, and no one to assure me that they were kindly, approving eyes, eyes which understood my extreme youth and were ready to forgive many a blunder. But this easy way of seeing things did not enter into the plan of my instructors. Those whose duty it was to initiate me into my new life had only one end in view ; I was to be taught the meaning of Duty with a big "D," and it would have been imprudent to allow me to imagine that others could be more indulgent. No half-measures for King Carol ; his creed was with a vengeance "all work and no play."

Owing to the tremendous snowdrifts, our train arrived several hours late. Whole regiments had been ordered out to clear the line, but even those several hours late were not late enough for me ; such was my terror of the ordeal before me that I kept sending prayers up to God that the train should never reach its goal. My fingers became quite clammy, so desperately did I cling to Nando's hand. He was exceedingly loving, but not very reassuring, as he too was anxious ; I could see it, although I did not know him very well then. Later, I always knew by a certain paleness about the nostrils of his supremely aristocratic nose when Nando was nervous. We tried to smile at each other, but they were rather poor little smiles and I felt tears dangerously near.

Our engine began to utter a series of long-drawn shrieks as though agonizingly glad to reach home ; from afar came a sound of music, our train was slowly puffing into the station. Courage ! nothing now could stop the hour fixed by Fate for my first encounter with those that were to become my people. . . .

The wheels groaned, the music became louder ; now the troops lined up on the edge of the platform began cheering. Timidly peeping out of the window I liked the soldiers' faces, stalwart, swarthy little men with dark intelligent eyes and very white teeth. They wore dark grey coats and had queer-shaped hats with long cocks' plumes hanging far down on one side, rather in the style of the Italian Bersaglieri.

“Those are my Chasseurs,” explained Nando, “the First Battalion of which I am major; I was promoted major when we married.”

So those were Nando's Chasseurs; the possessive pronoun had something reassuring about it, gave you a family feeling. Strangely enough, although everything else was at first alien in my new home, from the very beginning I had a consoling feeling about the army. I never felt a stranger amongst our soldiers, I seemed immediately accepted by them without conditions and without distrust. Was it perhaps a prognostication of the future, of those glorious but terrible times which we were destined to endure together?

Perhaps—

The train had stopped.

The music and the cheering had risen to a deafening din. It was especially the soldiers who made the most noise. How they cheered! Their mouths were wide open showing rows of strong white teeth, and how their eyes flashed! All through my life I have heard them cheer thus, even in that terrible winter of 1916-17 when they were but tragic ghosts of their former selves, ragged, starved scarecrows, poor remnants of once proud regiments, with tattered uniforms and on their feet bandages instead of boots. But even then they cheered, bravely marching past, dragging their frozen, tired feet through the snow. Yes, even then they cheered and their eyes which had seen death in every form, had contemplated every horror of war and retreat, stared into mine, and there was still confidence in that look they sent me, a sort of dumb trust which suffering and defeat could not uproot.

Nando sprang out first and was warmly greeted by Uncle who stood well to the fore, heading the rows of officials crowding behind him. He stretched up his arms to help me down and then clasped me to his heart. He was trembling, he too was full of emotion. This was a great day, a day of success and achievement, but there was also pain in it, for Uncle also had known sacrifice, he too had buried more than one dream.

According to correct precedence the officials were pre-

sented to me. Everybody was there, the Prime Minister, Lascar Catargi, with all the members of the Cabinet, several of whom had been at our wedding; the mayor of the capital, who was then Triandafil, if I rightly remember, the rector of the University, the president of the Chambers of the Senate, representatives of the Law, of the Army, of the Church, the chief of the police, and their wives had mostly come with them, each one having donned beautiful new toilettes for the occasion, for Roumanian ladies are exceedingly smart. The music continued to play, the soldiers to cheer. The din was tremendous. The mayor pushed forward, offering the traditional bread and salt; he made a welcoming speech which no one could hear because of the noise. Finally the ladies worked their way through the crowd of men and absolutely buried me under showers of heavy bouquets which I simply could not hold. My precious dress was trodden on by a hundred eager feet, I was crushed and tossed hither and thither as a cork on a tumultuous sea, for Roumanian receptions are warm but not orderly, and the one who is being received has a pretty hard struggle to keep afloat.

I was much impressed by the Roumanian type of beauty. Those dark Oriental-looking women fascinated me. There was especially a certain Madame Rasti, wife of the Prefect of Police, whom I could not take my eyes off. There was something of the odalisque in her olive complexion and heavy slumbrous eyes. Clad all in blood-red, sable-trimmed velvet, she was indeed of striking appearance, the like of which I had never seen, except perhaps in Aunt Zina of childhood's memory.

One of the faces I remembered from Sigmaringen was Peter Carp, who screwed in his eye-glass to have a good look at me; his expression was ironical but not unkind. Somehow I liked his face. There was also my special friend General Vladescu; we greeted each other like old acquaintances and there was also of course Ion Kalinderu, well to the fore, and on whose rotund person the Grand Cordon of the Star of Roumania seemed to assume special importance. Somehow no other decoration looked as red or honourable as his. But it was all very confusing, very

frightening, though perhaps a little less terrible than I had imagined, and this was because everybody looked so pleased and so welcoming that they really made me feel as though this was a great day of rejoicing for them all.

The next move was to the Metropolitan Church for a Te Deum. In Roumania all official festivities begin with a Te Deum in church.

We took our places in a wonderful silver and blue coach drawn by four huge, coal-black Russian stallions with enormously long tails and manes. Uncle sat beside me and Nando opposite. Mamma never having permitted a shut carriage, even when it was bitterly cold, I was rather shocked that we should be shut in behind glass windows; I thought the people might feel slighted. All Mamma's convictions and principles had been so strong that she had, so to say, inoculated them into my blood. It took years before I could become free of them and some, as for instance her feeling about open air, exercise and punctuality, are as strong in me to-day as they were then. There was an incisive force about Mamma which set her stamp upon us for all time.

In spite of the bitter cold, the streets were crowded, all the troops had been turned out and we were given a warm reception. Full of curiosity I gazed out of my glass casket upon this new world, these new people who were to be mine. My impressions were confused, I hardly knew what I felt. I tried to bow as graciously as possible, but bowing is an art which has to be learnt little by little; in those days I was stiff as a puppet, and as in all things this was caused by my insufferable, youthful self-consciousness. The moment one becomes more interested in other people than in oneself, shyness disappears. Ease of manner is not vanity, but victory over oneself.

The Te Deum was very impressive. I loved the dark, mellow-tinted church with its ancient frescoes, its fine old silver candlesticks and lamps. In those days I was no connoisseur of old icons and Byzantine art, but from the first I felt their beauty and atmosphere, they spoke strongly to the artist within me, but the priests' voices were very poor in comparison with those I had heard in Russia and in

Mamma's little chapels; besides, they had, alas! a way of singing through their noses to which no really musical ear could agree. The chants, which in Russia were so compelling and uplifting, had no grandeur here; in fact they marred the otherwise really beautiful service. Remembering Mamma's injunctions, I followed the lead, though somewhat sheepishly, when the *bine credincioşii* (the true believers) crossed themselves, but it made me feel a bit of a fraud. It was only very much later in life that I realized that there are politenesses of the heart which are not a comedy nor weak concessions, but an understanding of right values and of those small things important to each man in his own sphere.

Here also I bore the brunt of a thousand eyes, looking through me, appraising, criticizing, eyes full of curiosity, pity, interest or dawning sympathy, each man according to the depth or shallowness of his own heart and soul. But I suffered; I felt small, foolish, insignificant and "exceeding lonely amidst the multitude." A slow procession back through the streets, more troops, more crowds, more cheering, and looking up I saw the Union Jack and the Roumanian colours, floating side by side from every house. The beloved old flag! Tears came into my eyes, that flag meant home! At that time the blue, yellow and red meant nothing to me, not yet did they touch my heart. And all of a sudden, there in that royal glass case, rolling through unknown streets with two almost unknown men seated beside me, I was invaded by a feeling of utter desolation. Crowds, cheering, music, noise, welcome, rejoicing, and although the central figure around which all this fuss was being made, in reality I was but a poor, forlorn little stranger in a strange land. . . .

Finally we arrived at the palace, which was not a very imposing building, squat, low and of no distinctive style. With a clatter of hoofs we drove up to one of the front doors to the inevitable sound of music and cheering. With great ceremony the King conducted me up the grand staircase, a fine marble construction, imposing and monumental, branching off on both sides at the first landing to a pillared hall above. Uncle's emotion was evident, and I can still hear

the click of his sword on the marble of the steps as we mounted.

White-clad schoolgirls were lined up on both sides, singing songs of welcome while they threw flowers before us ; it was a very pretty sight.

Officers, high officials, court dignitaries, servants in gala liveries, and Uncle at my side, sober, steady, but deeply moved for all his outward calm, and close on our heels Nando, pale, anxious, nervously eager to get rid of all these people so as to be at last alone with his bride. . . .

The apartment prepared for us was to the right of the grand stairs, the doors were thrown open and Uncle led me into my new home. . . . My new home !

A feeling of utter despair came over me at the sight of the rooms that had been prepared for us, and that, into the bargain, had, I believe, been newly done up in our honour. I am not going to weary my readers with a detailed description of that apartment ; let it simply be said that it was German *mauvais goût* at its worst, when it sets out to be heavy and cruel ; *Altdeutsch* and bad rococo ! From my point of view they were a disaster. My disappointment and disillusion actually amounted to physical pain, I felt my already heavy heart sink lower and lower, till I wondered if it would ever end sinking. Rich, dark, pompous, unhomelike, inhospitable rooms, all windows, doors and fixtures and nowhere a cosy corner, nowhere a fireplace, nowhere any flowers, nowhere a comfortable chair !

Uncle embraced me once more, expressed his hope that this was an auspicious day, the beginning of much happiness in my new home, and then he left us.

My new home. . . .

I sank down into a seat, a hard *Altdeutsch* seat ; Nando came over to me, took me into his arms.

"You are tired ?"

"Yes, a little. . . ."

"Those hateful official ceremonies ?"

"Yes, they were rather long."

"You must have a rest now, there will be a big dinner this evening."

"Yes . . . a big dinner. . . ."



And there were many big dinners, one after another, and many ceremonies, and much rejoicing and many faces, all of them friendly, welcoming, but all of them new. Nowhere a stable point, nothing to hang on to except Nando, but here in Roumania Nando was Crown Prince, Uncle's nephew, a man of duty, trained to do Uncle's bidding, trained to see with Uncle's eyes, almost to use Uncle's words.

Duty, it was all duty, from the early morning when we got up, to the evening when we went to bed. Duty, duty, and it was winter and my rooms were *Altdeutsch* and rococo. And both Uncle and Nando said I must have no friends: no friends, because here in this new country it was dangerous to have friends; politics, jealousies, intrigues. . . .

Yes, they told me many things, there were many words, they talked politics, they had long military discussions, they smoked strong cigars and all they said was Chinese to me. And outside there was snow and frost, and no one seemed to understand anything about flowers here; there was a single camellia plant in my room with one waxy red and white flower on it, only one and that soon fell off, and the other buds did not open—poor hard little buds!

That was behind the scenes, but I am an optimist, and I hate people who wail, so I am going to show you the outside of it, what it looked like to others who had no entry to the *Altdeutsch* and rococo rooms, all doors, windows and fixtures. . . .

Beyond those doors I was being greatly "feasted." Every day there was some official function, all in my honour, dinners, balls, huge official receptions and deputations from all the four corners of the country who presented gorgeously decorated addresses and often brought some gift: Roumanian embroideries, carpets, carved or painted chests, books and icons and other objects representative of national industries. The ladies of the Liberal party, not then in power, brought me an artistically chased golden casket with a goodly sum of money with which I was to found some useful charity. The party in power offered us a large silver table centre with symbolic figures of very fine workmanship. But mostly the gifts were of a humbler kind.

Every degree of state dignitary and functionary passed before us, representatives of every nationality, every creed, every craft, every profession, every cloth. Civilians, soldiers, priests and even monks, also a deputation of Russian coachmen to present a silver platter with the traditional bread and salt.

It was interesting, but it was also very tiring and for some unknown reason I was not feeling well. I imagined it had something to do with the change of climate, perhaps the different food? But generally I had been absolutely immune to changes, and had I not the advantage of a Russian digestion? Was there perhaps some inexplicable change going on within me? Anyhow, I was feeling different from my usual self; depressed, no vitality, no sense of humour and a huge disgust for every sort of smell; it was quite distressing!

My trousseau dresses were brought out one after the other. I did my best to look as well and smart as possible so as to do honour to my husband. The two Louises made joint efforts to smarten up my coiffure; they curled and waved my poor hair with more goodwill than dexterity, sometimes in fact they made rather a sight of me. This I felt without being able to canalize their excellent intentions, myself being quite green in the art of dress. Besides, I was looking pinched, there were dark circles round my eyes, I had not my usual face, my cheeks were pale, I was getting thin and strangest of all my nose seemed to be growing longer! This was particularly noticeable in the first photographs taken of me as a married woman. I had a favourite velvet evening dress, a creation of Laferrière then *en vogue* in Paris. I disliked myself in many of my dresses, but I imagined that this particular gown was really becoming; it was a curious old plum colour with a delicious bloom on it and was made up with old lace which gave it the look of a costume of the Vandyke period. The tint of the velvet looked well with the turquoises Papa had given me. I was always fond of colour harmonies, and the greeny blue of the pale stones together with the old plum pleased my eye. Everything was still dormant in me, taste as well as intelligence; I was groping, and there were only occasional little flashes of light.

So I had myself photographed in this gown so as to send it home, and in this picture I noticed that my snubby little nose had lengthened ! Was it because my cheeks were less chubby, or what ? All this was very disturbing and there was no one to discuss it with. Lady Monson was still here, but I saw little of her ; she was caught up in a whirl of mundane gaieties ; besides, I was most jealously guarded by Nando and Uncle, and allowed to see almost no one except those received officially in crowds. Even my lady-in-waiting, Madame Grecianu, was only allowed to come to me when strictly on business. I was to be kept away from every outside influence. Ever since that trouble with poor Aunt Elisabeth and Hélène Vacarescu, uncle and nephew were filled with watchful mistrust, and this made me almost a prisoner. Uncle had laid down strict laws by which my husband religiously abode, as they just then entirely fitted in with his desires. But of course this was not exactly conducive to a cheerful life.

Looking back upon it I cannot help being astounded at their lack of knowledge of psychology when it came to treating a very young and lonely woman. I was like a tightly shut bud. They seemed afraid of its opening and hemmed me in with laws, defences and restrictions as though they could oblige their flower to bloom according to their own desires and at their appointed time.

Once when asked what I compared myself to, I answered : “ To a tree which has grown through a stone wall.” Already in those very early days my poor little roots were pressing against the wall. . . .

Amongst the many and mostly dull ceremonies I was being submitted to there was one which was exceedingly picturesque and gave me real pleasure. Nando and I were to be sponsors at the marriage of thirty-two peasant couples, chosen from the thirty-two Roumanian districts. According to Orthodox rites there are sponsors for marriages as well as for baptisms. This colourful thirty-two-fold wedding was celebrated at the Metropolitan Church and was indeed a pretty sight owing to the bright peasant dresses and the many lighted tapers against the dim, frescoed back-

ground of the old church. It was a picture my eyes took possession of with deep pleasure. Once happily "joined together" the thirty-two couples, seated in their own rustic carts drawn by magnificent grey oxen with huge gilded horns, passed in a grand procession before the palace windows, an attractive sight indeed, in which I discovered some of the romance I had thought to find in this far land. From the very first I was strongly attracted to the peasants, to those brave and patient tillers of the soil; so that rural pageant stands out as a pleasant memory. Less to my liking were the enormous receptions of all the Bucarest ladies gathered together for presentation. They were lined up in two rows all along the length of the large gold and white ballroom. Uncle gave me his arm and as we passed down that formidable front, he presented each lady; their name was legion and they were of every age and of every degree, enough to make the stoutest spirit quail. As two are company and three are none, Nando had to trot behind us, rather an embarrassing proceeding, but luckily for him there were familiar faces amongst that alarming army of women.

My heart would sink as the doors were thrown open to reveal those endless rows, waiting to be smiled upon. I was distressingly stiff, awkward and tongue-tied and at a terrible disadvantage because of my insufficient French.

Out of this sea of faces two women stand out as a blessed relief merely because they had the courage to address me first instead of, according to protocol, waiting for me to begin the conversation. One was Madame Cesianu (later Marquise Belloy) a stout, cheerful lady, irrepressibly good-humoured and talkative. The other was Hélène Perticari, wife of one of Uncle's A.D.C.'s, a lovely woman with naturally wavy auburn hair and large round eyes placed far apart under perfectly arched brows; a woman somewhat the type of Lily Brayton, whose beauty later I so much admired on the English stage. The spark of sympathy kindled at that early hour grew to a steady flame as years advanced, and to-day both these ladies are cherished friends.

I continued to be impressed by the type of Roumanian beauty; that olive skin, those dark eyes and raven hair were most attractive, but in my opinion the women were much

better looking than the men. The more Oriental the type the more I admired it, and I shall always remember Madame Simu seated in her box during the gala performance, so alluringly exotic with a cascade of red roses falling from her shoulders. A slim, blonde, nondescript little creature all in white and turquoise with a trimming of innocent pale pink rosebuds, I gazed down upon her, full of admiration, and she looked up at me, wondering perhaps at the excessive fairness of my hair and complexion ; it was indeed the meeting of East and West.

The performance itself—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*—did not impress me much ; I understood no Roumanian and although great care had been expended, the Roumanian theatre was still in its infancy. Since then I have seen remarkable progress in this direction.

## *Chapter II*

### SOCIETY IN THE CAPITAL

**I**N its turn all the feminine world of Bucarest was of course exceedingly interested in this little English princess who had come to live in its midst, and more than one motherly heart was, I believe, moved when they saw how ridiculously young and immature I was.

Those with whom, owing to their official position, I most often came together were the ladies of the actual Government, for in Roumania the ministers have a predominant position and are conspicuous guests on every official occasion.

The ladies of the Conservative Government were headed by sober old Madame Lascar Catargi, a good old body but hardly of the decorative sort. There were also Madame Jaques and Madame Alexander Lahovary, sisters-in-law ; the first-mentioned small and exceedingly black with a large mouth and many teeth, who always looked at you through her lorgnette, the other tall, stately, with natural, or unnatural, fair hair (in those days I could not distinguish the difference). Madame Symka, as Society called her, was the great wit of the actual Government in opposition to Madame Sturdza, the sharpened tongue of the Liberal party. These two ladies had much to say of each other, but their remarks were more amusing than charitable. Of the two, Madame Symka was certainly the more attractive. Later we became firm friends, but at first I was frightened of her ; she was so astoundingly self-assured, so terrifically "French," so embarrassingly intelligent, and she was so much more painted than I was accustomed to. In fact, she awed me and made me feel small ; there was a chasm between Madame Symka Lahovary and the somewhat prejudiced old home atmosphere to which I had been accustomed. There was also Madame Peter Carp (daughter of dear old Marie Cantacuzène who had been present

at our marriage), a severely simple lady of the motherly, good-housewife type, but very cultured and well-read as were all Marie Cantacuzène's daughters. Her attire was old-fashioned, her evening dresses bared her shoulders as in the crinoline period, she also made solemn curtsies which were quite in keeping with her whole demeanour. Then there was Madame Take Ionescu, a tall Englishwoman with short hair, a passionate rider, side by side with whom I have had many a good gallop, and there was Madame Marghiloman (born Stirbey, later Madame Ion Bratianu), to whom I felt greatly drawn. She was much the youngest of them all and although somewhat forbidding, when she laughed had a delicious way of crinkling up her nose. There was something entirely upright about Elise Marghiloman which attracted me, but there was also a certain prickliness about her which made approach difficult. Although much kindness was shown me I felt very lost, and Nando's painful anxiety to prevent any friendship was of course little conducive to any more genial contact.

It was, in fact, many years before I was allowed to know anyone more intimately. This made life exceedingly lonely and was one of the reasons why I took a long time in becoming a really good Roumanian.

Second to the Government the Corps Diplomatique played a great part in Uncle's order of existence. Berlin and Vienna were well to the fore, France was dealt with politely; Russia, though always distrusted, was treated with the minutest care and civility, but it was politeness due rather to apprehension than to affection. England in those early days had no close contact with Roumania. The two countries had few interests in common. Prince Bülow was German minister at Bucarest and Gudehowski was the Austrian. Later both these gentlemen made big careers. Old Fonton, the Russian, was a pleasant, animated little man, very thin, with excitable gestures, snow-white whiskers and eyes which seemed to pop out of his head. I remember how Uncle kept comparing him favourably to Hitrovo, his predecessor, who had been a dangerous intriguer. There was no British Minister at that moment, but Sir Charles Hardinge

was Chargé d’Affaires. His wife was charming and both were very good-looking.

King Carol was as well versed in foreign as in home politics. In fact everything was politics, they were his very *raison d’être*. He carefully weighed all that he did and said, always calculating the consequences, thereby, according to my negligible judgment, infinitely complicating life and creating difficulties out of things which might have been quite simple if taken more simply. It is not for me to judge my betters, but I suffered many years under his none too light sway ; it was a good school ; to-day I know how to be grateful for it, but for all that it meant much bitterness, saddening our youth and sometimes driving us to the verge of desperation or revolt.

It was especially my husband who suffered ; he was never a rebel, for a certain glorious joy can be found in being a rebel. I for one have known this joy, but Nando was brought up to obey. Never was there a more loyal Crown Prince. He listened to his uncle in all things, blindly following his lead, submitting to his every demand, never revolting and always eager to propitiate any differences which arose between the tyrannical old gentleman and myself. It was a thankless rôle to play, as he often found himself between hammer and anvil. He did not always agree with his uncle’s views, often feeling irritated, sometimes even humiliated by his overruling manner, but he remained pliant, acquiescent and patient to a degree which I admired although it often made my blood boil.

Our youth is a long tale of abnegation. Outwardly happy and seemingly surrounded by affection and goodwill, it was nevertheless often a weary and thorny path on which, day by day, something had to be given up, some desire crushed, some dream buried, some impulse trodden upon. It was one ceaseless renunciation and surrendering of will, a continual looking on and seeing others possess, enjoy and do those things which were denied to us. Yes, it was a hard school. I do not regret, I believe that all things have a meaning, even the hardest ; every humiliating surrender, every bitter tear, all go for the building up of something even if we do not see it at the time. But I cannot say that I enjoyed it.



I hated it in fact with every fibre of my healthy being. I loathed this relentless form of education, which was a continual struggle for domination and crushing of will. I admit that it taught me many a lesson, it strengthened my muscles, taught me to be unselfish and gave me a strong foundation for those later years when I had to shoulder my own responsibilities.

Once, after my husband had come to the throne and we were looking back upon our youth, I expressed the opinion that I had been given a healthy training. "For you, perhaps," said Nando. "You were a rebel, you could even find pleasure in a good fight. I was born obedient, battle was not my style; you had always high spirits, the joy of life was strong in you, so you have not been crushed. You thrived upon opposition, but I feel that in me some spring was broken, it was not necessary to be so severe with me. I had been brought up to a strong sense of duty, whilst you . . ." Here he paused.

"—whilst I?"

He looked at me and smiled: "Whilst you were not brought up at all, you simply grew."

He had said a true word; I had not been brought up at all, I simply grew. I was a child of nature, I had nothing to throw off, no one had chained my will, so I was able to grow through a stone wall.

The moment had come for Lady Monson and for Colonel Howard to leave. They had been lavishly entertained and most hospitably received everywhere, but their time was up, and having given me over to my new family and country, their mission was at an end and they were to depart.

The last link with the past was to be broken.

How well I remember my last interview with Lady Monson. I can smile to-day when looking back upon it, but at the time it was tragic enough.

She found me seated in the disastrous rococo room, my so-called "boudoir." I had been making fruitless efforts to try and make it look homelike, but had given up in despair, no cosy corner could be wrung from its false, inhospitable elegance. I had collapsed amidst the half-unpacked treasures

from home, my wedding presents lay strewn about on tables, chairs and floor, it was like an inglorious battlefield ; I had been vanquished in the struggle. Everything was out of place in this heavily pretentious setting ; my dearest possessions took on a forlorn and reproachful aspect ; they were as homesick as I was.

I certainly must have looked a poor, forsaken little human being.

Lady Monson, always voluble, hurried towards me with many exclamations, her attitude was one of humorous commiseration :

"My dear child ! you do not look very cheerful, and all your pretty things on the floor ! Are you feeling seedy ? You're so pale."

"Yes, I'm not feeling well, I can't understand what's the matter with me. I feel giddy, everything makes me sick, food disgusts me, and I, who never felt the difference of climate, cannot get accustomed to this one. Everything makes me feel sick ; smells, noises, faces, even colours. I'm altogether changed, I don't recognize my own self !"

"Oh ! but, my dear, this is an excellent sign, how delighted everybody will be !"

"Delighted ? Why ? Because I'm feeling sick and miserable ?" I was aghast and stared at her horrified, wondering if she was crazy.

"But, my dear, you surely know what it means when a young wife begins feeling sick ?"

"What should it mean ?" More and more perplexed I felt humiliatingly near tears.

"You don't mean to say no one ever told you ?" . . . It was Lady Monson's turn to be aghast.

"Told me what ?" My eyes were filling with fear. . . . "Told me what ?"

So the good lady sat down beside me amidst the depressed flotsam brought from home and tried to explain to me, tried to make me understand what was happening and why Nando, Uncle, and with them the whole country, would be so glad. . . .

Curiously enough I took it tragically. I felt somehow as though I had been trapped.

So this is what they wanted me for, they wanted me to give them an heir ! But I had only just left home, Mamma, Ducky. I was feeling so ill, so lonely ; there was no one to go to and no one to talk to ; there were no flowers and no one seemed to care about fresh air and out-door exercise, and everything brought from home looked so out of place here in these awful rooms where there were no corners one could sit in. It was no good even trying to arrange them, nothing was any good. And all the morning Nando had military duties, and at lunch he and Uncle talked about things I could not understand and then they smoked cigars and went on talking even when lunch and dinner were over, and cigar-smoke made me more sick than anything else, and they were such huge cigars, you never could hope that they would come to an end. And in the afternoon when I wanted to drive out, Nando says there is no place to drive to, and he says I must have no friends, that we cannot have any friends in this country and Uncle says . . .

Yes, it all came bubbling out and when put into words suddenly revealed to me all the despair that had been slowly accumulating, and finally bursting into tears I laid my head on the shoulder of the good lady who patted me in a motherly, though somewhat patronizing way, for she was feeling wise, and hugely but sadly superior to this foolish child to whom no one had explained anything. It was distressing enough no doubt, but it was life, and life had its hard sides, but I must not make a tragedy out of small miseries ; all beginnings were difficult, and after all I ought to be proud of satisfying my new country's ambitions ; think of the joy if it were a boy ! Lady Monson spoke wisely, but she also spoke as one looking back upon life, as one already out of touch with the distress of the young. The long road which lay behind her had made of her a philosopher. She knew that all things, even griefs and pains, were transient. To her my pain looked small, unreal, rather pathetic and just a little absurd, which it probably was. But for me, who had all my life before me with its daily bitter little discoveries, it was real enough and huge and terrifying and above all I was lonely and homesick ; a poor uprooted little simpleton with a fair head stuffed full of dreams.

This was not at all a romantic country, it was all prohibition, interdiction and politics. And Uncle. . . .

That was always the refrain, the end of every sentence : "And Uncle,"—" *Der Onkel*," the incomprehensible shadow which already at Sigmaringen had darkened Nando's joy.

"*Der Onkel*" . . . but it was no good trying to explain ; even Lady Monson who had come from home could not understand. . . .

The months which followed were uniform, grey and depressing, and seldom did anything come to brighten their tediousness, which was aggravated by my state of health.

Letters from home only made matters worse. Mamma, following up her brave attitude towards life in general and towards her children in particular, kept writing how gay and happy they all were at home, how she had taken Ducky to St. Petersburg for the season, so as to give her a change. Every epistle was overflowing with descriptions of the joyful things they were doing and at the same time I was scolded for writing such dull, uninteresting letters.

"Give yourself a little trouble to write amusing descriptions of your life, your surroundings, tell us about what you do and about the people you see," she urged. But, alas ! there were no amusing descriptions to make. Since the official festivities had come to an end, I saw no one, and day followed upon day, a dismal chain without a break. Nor in those days could I see the humorous side of my "patheticness."

But worst of all, with a mistaken idea of cheering me up, she had forbidden Ducky to write to me the real state of her feelings, "so as not to depress her," she said. Ducky was only to write about her gaieties, her balls, her friends who were filling up the place I once occupied. In reality Ducky was moping as much for me as I was for her. She had in fact been carried off to St. Petersburg so as to help her over the parting which she had minded almost tragically, for her nature was deep and loving and always somewhat stormy.

With a strange lack of psychology, Mamma imagined it would cheer me to hear about the fun my sister was having, whilst I was in reality only hungering to hear how she missed

me, longed for me, deplored my absence. Mamma did not seem to realize that when you feel like an exile or one cast out from Paradise, it is no consolation to hear of another's joy in the Eden you had to give up. Youth has a huge capacity for being miserable and I was too young to rejoice over the thought of my once inseparable companion being happy, gay and successful without me. I felt like a prisoner behind iron bars peeping out upon an impossibly happy world out of which he had been cast.

So there was pain everywhere, and the pity I felt for myself darkened the face of the sun.

Not being able to reconcile myself to the inhospitality of the rococo boudoir I took refuge in a small, plain, but harmless dressing-room leading off from the bedroom which was also one of my terrors, being all hard corners and unnecessary steps. Here in this back chamber there was a couch to which I fled on those days when I was feeling particularly sick.

The two Louises played, of course, a large part in my lonely life. They too were homesick and followed with anxiety the phases of their young mistress's distress.

Louise Lang was in herself a humorous figure had I only been able to realize it, but for the moment my sense of humour was at a low ebb; but looking back I smile at her memory.

That worthy person was magnificently certain that royalty really descended from beings not far removed from the gods. The Virgin Mary and royalty were the two outstanding landmarks of her simple faith. A crucifix hung over her bed, she said her beads with passionate regularity and she positively believed that the Devil had a tail. Louise Lang was in fact a species becoming more and more extinct; the species of the old family servant convinced that the King and her masters could "do no wrong." . . .

The remembrance of "old Louise," as I still call her in my mind, is indissolubly connected with a sad little episode which the loneliness of those first months of exile made almost tragic.

I had brought from home a bullfinch much resembling the bullfinch we used to tease in Grandmamma Queen's sacred apartments over which Grandpapa's many portraits

shed his shadow, or was it his light? It was an enchanting little bird and had been taught to pipe "*Freut Euch des Lebens*," a popular German *Volkslied*, a sweet little song but rather ironical perhaps under the actual circumstances. Bully sang it perfectly, but occasionally he would make a mistake, he would stop and scold himself in the most comic way, beginning over and over again till he got it right. And Bully had the same way as Grandmamma's bird of getting thin when angry, and when pleased of puffing himself out into a ball of pink and grey fluff. He would then hop from one side to another of his perch uttering the most endearing little pipes and poking his broad beak through the bars to be kissed.

I adored Bully and Bully adored me, but he also loved Louise, and his third love was an old servant who had come with us from Sigmaringen. We three received the homage of his songs, he sensed our coming from afar and he would greet us with his cheerful "*Freut Euch des Lebens*" even before he saw us. Everybody else was scolded and screeched at.

Bully became the supreme, nay, almost the only consolation of my loneliness. Nando was away all the morning at his barracks; I was allowed to see no one, hardly even my old lady-in-waiting. I was not yet accustomed to be sufficient unto myself and felt too ill to read more than a few hours a day. So much did old Louise and I play with Bully that he became quite tame, and when the window was shut, we always allowed him to fly quite freely about the rooms.

At the first feeling of spring in the air, our winged companion became importantly active, picking up off the floor all sorts of odds and ends for the building of a more than problematical nest. He would follow old Louise or me about from room to room, sometimes flying, sometimes running across the floor with comic little hops. It was difficult to say who loved the bird most, Louise or I; Bully had indeed become the central joy of our lives.

But this is a sad world, joys are not eternal, mostly indeed they are all too short, and the joy over Bully was destined to be too short.

One day I was feeling particularly miserable and lay curled on my "couch of refuge," as I called the sofa in my ugly

little dressing-room, which was papered a dull patterned grey, the colour of fog and defeat. So wretched was I that I could hardly lift my head. Old Louise was standing beside me, discoursing upon some homely subject in her prim, precise, monotonous way. Her talk was punctuated by occasional little curtsies in keeping with the respect in which she held my poor little person. Precious Bully was hopping about the floor, busy as always gathering together material for that nest which was destined never to be built.

Having come to the end of her dragging explanations, old Louise made a step backwards, ready to drop one of her inevitable curtsies. Only one step. . . . You will hardly be able to bear hearing it . . . but . . . That one step backwards was the end of our Bully and of his brave little song and also of his small hopes of building a nest. With that single step backwards old Louise crushed the one joy of our lonely homesick days. Louise trod on Bully. "For each man kills the thing he loves. . . ."

Never more did the cheerful "*Freut Euch des Lebens*" sound through the drab apartment. It had only needed that one step backwards, and Bully, with his song and his nesting ambitions, and with him all the joy he had been to us, was over for ever. Bully was wiped out as though he had never been.

I leave to the imagination of each to realize what the death of Bully meant to decorous old Louise and to her lonely little mistress.

Madame Grecianu, my lady-in-waiting, who had three grown-up daughters of her own, understood that the regime I was being submitted to was not the very best for a young woman who was to give an heir to the expectant country. So she plucked up her courage and went to the King.

"Our princess is moping," declared the old lady; "in her state of health this is not a good thing. Young people need company. Such absolute isolation is a mistake. She ought to be amused, to see people. It is not right that she should be exclusively left to her home-sickness and to the company of her maids."

Uncle, who in spite of his political austerity, really loved

me, was impressed by this "voice out of the wilderness." The case must be looked into, it was serious, an heir was the country's most cherished hope, nothing must endanger it. So the wise men of the realm put their heads together, Ion Kalinderu being chief councillor and the Prime Minister also having his say. This was a State affair, for was not H.R.H. bearing the future Crown Prince?

*La Princesse s'ennuie.* This was indeed perplexing. What form of amusement could be safely offered her which, while being sufficiently agreeable, would not give her undue illusions about freedom? What entertainments were in keeping with the programme elaborated for the education of one so young and unprepared and in whom the seeds of frivolity and independence might be lying dormant? Weighty problem! No false move must be made, no wrong door must be opened, no dangerous key must be put into her hand.

After much pondering and weighing of the matter those "stern men with empires in their brains," every one of them beyond the age of dreams and illusions, hit upon the bright idea that tea-parties must be organized for "the poor child."

But in Roumania, according to King Carol's orderly conception of things, nothing must be undertaken *à la légère*, the pros and the cons must be duly examined, no one's susceptibilities must be ignored, no one must be slighted or offended, and as everyone was claiming the honour of coming into contact with the country's latest importation, the social ladder must be strictly taken into consideration.

One would have to begin at the beginning: The wives of Ministers, generals, judges, professors, etc., were the first on the list; later, when all the important weighty people had been waded through, a few younger ones might *perhaps* be included: *Aber dies muss man noch reiflich überlegen.* This was one of Uncle's favourite formulas.

So tea-parties were organized in a deadly dull room with pompeian-red walls and ugly over-gilded chairs. As principal decoration, a series of war pictures representing King Carol during the campaign of 1876. Uncle under fire, Uncle on the ramparts, Uncle passing the Danube on a bridge of boats, Uncle on a prancing horse, Uncle in a snowstorm, Uncle receiving Osman Pasha's sword.



And beneath these patriotic pictures sat the sad little exile and received lean ladies and fat ladies, kind ladies and supercilious ladies, smart ladies and shabby ladies, ladies that were wrinkled and ladies that were painted, ladies who talked volubly and ladies who were almost as shy as the little stranger herself; but of these there were few, for Roumanians in general have a great flow of words at their disposal.

Madame Grecianu, sensing the hopeless boredom of these gatherings, flitted backwards and forwards like a grey moth between the different groups, doing her best to lighten the heavy atmosphere, whilst the unfortunate little creature who was to be "amused" sat all but mute with an agonized expression in her eyes, wondering if she would get through the ordeal without collapsing, for the creating of an heir was causing her certain discomforts over which she had no control and which even the Spartan principles with which her mother had inoculated her could not help her to overcome.

I remember a sea trip in the company of one of the most ceremonious, elegant, polite and respectful gentlemen civilization could produce. But the sea made sport of all his poor little shams. He became greener and greener, conversation died by degrees, and finally, draping the last shreds of his dignity about him, he tottered to the side of the vessel, not even finding the energy to flee where he would not be seen.

Thus it was with me at these deadly parties, during which I was the object of kindly but penetrating curiosity. I was as though on exhibition, an interesting acquisition everyone had a right to look at and criticize. I did my small best to be patient and good and long-suffering. I donned my smartest trousseau dresses, wore my politest smile, aired my best French, but all in vain: "The lovely new-coming little Crown Prince"—as an enthusiastic Dalmatian, a generation later, once said to my little Serbian Queen whilst offering her a silver dagger for the one not yet there—"The lovely new-coming little Crown Prince" had no mercy upon his seventeen-year-old mother and overthrew all her poor, brave little pretences.

An added torture was that we had been brought up with the stiff British ideas of that period when it was considered improper to speak of a coming family event. *Tout au plus*,

it was discreetly whispered that such-and-such a lady was "in delicate health," and this confidence was never made when the children were in the room; that would have been most unseemly! But in this country nearer the Rising Sun, none of these little pruderies held good. There was a great glory in the fact that a child was to be born into the world, and of course this was magnified a hundredfold when it was a royal child.

So indiscreet questions were asked of me; I was openly congratulated and I was expected to give details about a condition of which I understood nothing myself. It was a ghastly ordeal, which each time made me feel that I must sink into the ground.

The wise men's inspiration of how to amuse a homesick princess did not therefore prove a great success. The cure threatened to become more cruel than the illness. But having had her say for the moment Madame Grecianu felt she could do no more.

Here I feel that I must call back to memory a quaint figure who at that depressed period crossed my path.

I was suffering from toothache, cruelly, abominably, I was one constant throb of pain. This, I was told, was also in connexion with "the lovely new-coming little Crown Prince," and that was supposed to make my suffering less, which it did not.

But with my toothache Dr. Young came into my life.

Dr. Young was an English subject, but born an American. He was one of Nature's gentlemen, but he was also original.

His art was great, but not painless for the one upon whom he was to use it; nevertheless, his visits became a solace to my solitude.

Middle-aged, dry and humorous, his face was quite that of the "Uncle Sam," goatee and all. He said "good day" without effusion and his "good-bye" was equally emotionless, but somehow you all the same felt that he was pleased to see you. He was a collector of good pictures, could discourse upon Roumanian art and always came accompanied by a neat little store of anecdotes about his clients of which even the most comic were related without a smile or the

flicker of an eyelid. His calm was sculptural, but his face had settled into wrinkles of fun. His one weakness was a pronounced sense of opposition which occasionally induced him to contradict himself, because it was ever beneath his dignity to agree with you on even the most simple subject.

When specially catering for his approval I would present a question to him the wrong way round, which occasionally trapped him into saying what I wanted to hear.

In spite of what he stood for, this queer personage with his still queerer ways became a friend in need. He tortured my upper and my lower jaw, extracting four teeth, as he declared I had too many for the small space reserved for them, but he filled my young empty brain with strong and breezy maxims which fanned through the miasmas of my ennui like a healthy breeze. I think he pitied me, but it was certainly not his creed to express any such thing. All weakness was taboo; he made you feel ashamed of wailing.

One of his words has remained with me for ever. This was at a later date; he found me bemoaning some news received in a letter from home. My tears were flowing like a heavy spring shower: "Wipe your eyes," said Dr. Young, "this is not going to be the last disappointment in your life."

This trite summing-up of a situation, pronounced without either smile or frown, was characteristic of the man.

Our friendship long outlasted the years when my teeth needed his attention. I to-day still treasure the memory of Dr. Young, who died only in the first year of the Great War.

He was a personal friend of both King Carol and Queen Carmen Sylva.

That an old American dentist should have brought solace to a little seventeen-year-old princess, gives the measure of how lonely her days must have been.

The months dragged slowly on towards spring. Easter came and I wanted to go to Holy Communion according to home habits. Everything was prepared with the usual ceremony and complications adherent to my new surroundings, and off I set, with my anxious old lady-in-waiting as sole companion, to the German Protestant Church. I was not

feeling well and the sadness of being for the first time alone for this blessed ceremony, and also the emotion, I suppose, proved too much for me. I fell in a dead faint on the floor before my good old Madame Grecianu was able to catch me in her arms.

Fluster, commotion, confusion,—I was brought home and laid upon my couch of refuge. Madame Grecianu, still all trembling with the fright I had caused her, rushed to the King to announce "*qu'un petit malheur s'était produit.*" The King, imagining that his dearest hopes had been frustrated, was ready to tear out his hair. He hurried to our apartment, where he found me slightly tearful but palely smiling and very much ashamed of myself, being convinced that Mamma would have highly disapproved of my fainting in public, like an early Victorian maiden in a ladylike novel.

The two Louises were fussing around me with smelling-salts and what-not, whilst pale and scared Nando was contemplating me with eyes of love. But His Majesty was relieved, his hopes had not been destroyed.

This was, however, another occasion on which Madame Grecianu dared again to express her opinion that something must be done to tear me out of the splenetic condition into which I was sinking to the detriment of my health.

But what could be done? Evidently the tea-parties were no great success; something else must be devised. But uncle and nephew were already so anchored in their everyday routine, from which every caprice or fantasy had been carefully extirpated, that it was not easy to break through the pedantic order of things so as to amuse a moping child who could not always keep up the pretence of being grown-up.

Again several wise heads were put together, and it was finally decided that a visit to the fortresses which encircled Bucarest might present a form of amusement acceptable to all sides.

King Carol was exceedingly proud of this series of fortifications, elaborated according to the most advanced military conceptions of that period. The Princess was fond of things military; the Minister of War and other high army officials could be invited to take part in the entertainment and it would at the same time be an occasion for His Majesty to make a

royal inspection. Certainly this was an excellent idea. Madame Grecianu nodded approval; she was also to be one of the party and with motherly understanding she would see to it that the military gentlemen did not over-fatigue her precious young charge.

Looking back on all the fuss and complications adherent to every one of King Carol's *déplacements*, be they ever so small, makes me smile a little sadly. To-day we have certainly simplified all this, we have lived through trials so great and changes so fundamental that it would appear absurd, if not absolutely sinful, to complicate life on all occasions as was then the way. Sometimes, however, incredible as it may seem, in looking back I feel like heaving a sigh of regret.

Any change in the dismal everyday programme was acceptable to me, so, in spite of the Minister of War and the several old generals who were to constitute the backbone of the party, I was as pleasurably excited as I was expected to be. No particular remembrance has, however, remained to me of this military entertainment except of how dear old Madame Grecianu, full of a mother hen's anxiety for her princess's welfare, hung on to the back of my ample "bell" skirt in case I should collapse when, in demonstration of their excellence, the different cannons of the forts were to be fired off for His Majesty's approval. I much resented this unnecessary fuss made over my person and tried to make my old lady-in-waiting understand that, being an admiral's daughter and having stood on many a deck during the firing of guns, a few fortification cannons were not going to make me faint; at which she smiled at me with that broad smile of motherly indulgence which was her sweetest characteristic.

Spring having come at last, like a timorous guest, Uncle had an even more unusual entertainment in store for his troublesome homesick niece. This was a visit to a monastery and to a convent situated amidst lakes and swamps a little way beyond the town. To-day, when motors have brought all places easily within reach, this has become quite a short drive, but in those days of slow carriages, it was quite an excursion which had to be organized with care *und viel Ueberlegen*—German comes instinctively to my tongue when I

think of dear old King Carol, as it was always in that language that we conversed together.

Uncle's conversation was always instructive, and if it was often beyond my comprehension, it was my fault, not his. He loved speaking about his adopted country. He had put all his energy, all his intelligence, political ability and first-rate German efficiency into his life's work. He was always interesting, but to one so young and under-educated as I was his somewhat pedantic dissertations occasionally seemed rather dull.

But at last we were going out into the country, beyond the confines of the town, a thing I had been craving for, but which, in spite of my pleading, had not yet been granted me, not out of unkindness but merely because their imagination did not stretch so far as to understand that a wee bit of change occasionally would have made all the difference to my cramped and incredibly dull life.

I must be forgiven for over and over again using the vague term "they," because it was in this impersonal form that the huge "vetos" of life rose before me, restricting everything, blotting out every possibility, effacing all joy-of-life out of my days. "They" did not want it, "They" could not understand, "They" did not find this or that in keeping with a princess's dignity, "They" were always in eternal opposition to my every desire and aspiration, and as "They" had no special form or colour or face, "They" were difficult to fight, persuade or overcome. . . . "They, They, They" terrorized my poor little life.

Well, this vague "They" did not comprehend my natural desire to get into touch with the real "feel" of the country, with its people, its soil, its habits, its history. From the very first I sensed that behind the deadly ennui of the life I was condemned to live, there was something else, something larger, more real, that might even be tinged with some of that poetry I had imagined I should find in this far land. It lay no doubt somewhere beyond the daily round, beyond the palace which stifled me, beyond the town which held me prisoner, beyond the narrow horizon which hemmed me in. It was like a big heart beating somewhere outside, waiting for me, a heart that would one day understand me, would one

day beat also for me. And now, suddenly, a door was being opened ; I was to be allowed a peep into the country. Uncle did not in the least realize that, with this meagre little promenade, he was sowing the first real seed of love for Roumania in my heart.

In Bucarest I had simply found a town inferior to the towns I had known, a city without any special character and with no definite face, a rather poor imitation of Occidental towns. I did not know in those days that it was a gay, a happy, even a frivolous town. No fun or gaiety was ever allowed to penetrate the palace walls ; but the craving for the country lay within me ; for open spaces, for green forests, fields and meadows, for sky, river and flowers, and for long roads that would lead away from streets—even towards the sea perhaps, towards the deep blue sea.

I look back to that excursion to Cernica and Paserea as to a day of initiation, the initiation into the spirit of the country, to the mystery and poetry of those sanctuaries scattered far and wide amongst the green sweet places of the land. Ever since that day, a steady love grew up in my heart for the convents and monasteries of Roumania, for their beauty, calm and peace, for their delicious old-world charm, for their strong link in the chain of the past.

To add to the enchantment of this first touch with the "outside" we were to drive in a carriage drawn by four enchanting Norwegian ponies. Thick-set, stalwart little animals, cream-coloured with immensely broad necks, rendered broader still by high-hogged manes. Their rounded haunches had the colour of unripe apricots and a quaint dark line ran the whole length of their backs from their foreheads to the utmost tip of their long-flowing tails.

These sturdy little horses filled my heart with almost aching delight ; I would throw my arms round their broad necks, bury my face against them, breathing in the odour of their skin which reminded me of Tommy, of Ruby, of Viceroy and of all the horses that had played such a large part in my childhood. Precious little apricot-coloured creatures, you never realized the ecstasy you were in those days to my lonely uprooted heart. You were a link with the past, nor were you wise, critical or educational, and the trot-



THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN OF ME IN ROUMANIA, 1893.





trot of your sixteen feet made a joyful sound on the hard alien roads so far from home.

Cernica : a monastery built in the middle of vast swamps all a-flower with wild yellow irises. A curious, rather unsafe-looking wooden bridge, very long, flat, half-rotting away, which swayed beneath the feet of the four Norwegian ponies, a bridge which ran over into a narrow road between the swamps leading towards a little colony of white cottages grouped round an old church. A lonely-looking place over which lay a strange stillness full of melancholy charm ; it had something world-forgotten about it, something forlorn, almost decaying.

The church was reached by driving under an ancient belfry set in the enormously thick outer walls of a large enclosed court-yard, roughly paved with round cobbles. The bells were ringing for all they were worth, making a great ado, and when with a clatter of horses' hoofs we drove up before the church door, a dark river of monks came pouring out to meet us, a procession of bearded men, sable-clothed and soft-footed, looking huge in their long dark cassocks ; their high head-dress and dense black veils adding to their height ; their gestures were humble and they kept their eyes turned to the ground. The Abbot, or Staritz, bent low before the King, offering him Cross and Bible to kiss, and then ushered us into the church whilst the dark brethren lifted up their voices in a queer wailing chant. A *Te Deum* was sung, the monks' voices were untrained, inharmonious, but the monotonous sing-song, although not particularly pleasing to the ear, added in a way to the atmosphere of the place.

I loved the mellowness of the shady sanctuary, its dim light, its tapers and swaying silver lamps, its half-effaced frescoes ; there was a certain poetry about it, something primitive, "Eastern." It was a picture in half-tones, it took hold of my imagination, it touched some chord within me, awoke the artist slumbering in my soul. There was poetry also in the little white habitations where the monks lived, tiny little houses with thatched or shingled roofs, their small gardens running down towards the reed-filled swamp ; and everywhere yellow irises, sun-coloured and slim, giving colour

to the water, greatly adding to the simple charm of the place. One old monk offered me a humble nosegay of sweet-scented cottage flowers, pinks, pansies, sweet basil, and little tufts of verberna; for roses it was still too early in the season. The old man's beard was frosted silver and his eyes had the dim colour of the lake which bordered his modest enclosure. I looked longingly over this wide, somewhat melancholy water-world; great peace lay over this lonely place, peace and deep, dreamy but very simple beauty which somehow my soul understood. For the first time since I had come to my new home, something awoke within me, something began to stir, something like a faint hope. It was like a wee, hardly discernible voice, sounding I knew not whence, promising that one day . . . one day perhaps, there would be some link, some understanding between me and this alien land. Some day, if only "They" would let me grope my way towards it, let me feel, touch, see, discover, understand; but to make this possible "They" must not shackle me with over-heavy chains.

But looking back upon my life, absurd as it may sound, that visit to Cernica was the first awakening of that deep love and understanding which gradually grew up between me and Roumania; therefore I cannot help looking upon that unimportant little drive into the swamps as a date which counts in my life.

From Cernica we went to Paserea. Paserea was a convent. The nuns were just as pleased to see us as the monks had been. But they were fussier, talked more, exclaimed, crossed themselves at every word they or Uncle said, ran hither and thither, behaved in fact rather as a flock of geese suddenly disturbed.

Here too there were innumerable small houses clustering round a central church. There was another Te Deum and then we were ushered into a large, low, carpet-hung room which smelt mustily of old apples and cold wood-smoke, and here we were given sticky jam on small glass plates and glasses of not quite clear water which Uncle told me not to drink. But I liked the sticky jam. The nuns were voluble in their praise of me; they hugged and kissed me and kept

throwing up their hands to the heavens, calling down a thousand blessings upon my head.

Of course I could not understand a word of what they said, but I understood that I was a thousand times welcome, and this feeling was good.

After having been sufficiently blessed we drove home. The hoofs of the Norwegian ponies clattered along the endless roads, raising clouds of dust. We passed small villages composed of tiny houses like those we used to draw as children, impossibly delightful little houses with shaggy maize-covered roofs, which I always imagined could only exist in fairy-stories.

Keenly alive to each detail I absorbed every picture ; every sight was a fresh joy. The scantily clad, large-eyed children on such familiar terms with the curly-haired pigs which seemed to be everywhere ; the respectful, dignified peasants who one and all lifted their heavy fur caps as we drove by ; the long files of carts drawn by stone-grey oxen plodding patiently along, they, too, raising clouds of dust. The curious old stone crosses leaning like tired watchers beside the wells, of which the long poles eternally pointed towards the skies, characteristic silhouettes of the Roumanian landscape. And above all the gipsies ; my husband and I shared the same irresistible attraction to the gipsies. Ragged, unkempt, filthy, nevertheless there was a peculiar spell about them, something mysterious, imponderable. Dark-skinned, stealthy, thievish but incredibly picturesque, they moved in hordes followed by their over-filled, creaking carts, quaintly spiked by tent-poles between which wild-eyed, tousle-headed children peeped out like little savages. Like little savages also they would run after you, hands extended, clamouring for pennies, turning cartwheels, persistent, intrusive, not to be shaken off, a sore trial but withal uncannily attractive so that you could not take your eyes off them. Such incredible old hags, witches out of forgotten legend, the grey strands of their hair hanging about their faces, their heads wound turban-wise with bright coloured cloths. The young men upright with long dark curls falling to their shoulders carrying bright copper vessels on their backs. Their eyes were smouldering, hot, suspicious, and the young girls striding

proudly beside them might have been beggared Indian queens.

A wandering people eternally on the move, as though some inexplicable unrest were driving them from land to land ; from place to place. Thieves and musicians, nomads, full of secret mystery which one longed to unravel ; ever again we fell under their charm.

All this I saw and my eyes opened wide, the artist within me deeply rejoiced. Yes, this was Roumania, the land of the Rising Sun. These endless roads, this dust, these peasants, these villages, these files of carts, those long-poled wells painted against the enormous sky, all those fields, that wide, wide view over the plain. . . . Roumania. . . .

Finally the day came for moving to Sinaia, that day which, according to Uncle's code, could never be changed, was not to be changed this year either, for the sake of a moping young woman who was carrying within her the hope of the country.

But the slow calendar did at last reach the blessed day of migration and the King and court were transferred from plain to mountain. O blessed day !

Like a captive whose chains are suddenly taken off, the joy of being in the country was almost unbearably great. The keen fresh air, the giant trees, the mountain background, and above all those marvellous meadows, green, luscious, starred by a thousand flowers, and all the flowers larger and more deeply coloured than anywhere else.

Sinaia is indeed a beautiful place, now I have got accustomed to its beauty ; but that first time I saw it, it came to me somewhat in the form of a revelation ; after the hot dusty ugliness of Bucarest it was release, rapture, enchantment.

For this year we were still Uncle's guests, but farther up, on the very edge of the forest, a little house was being got ready for us, a sort of glorified Swiss cottage which was called the "Foişor." Nando and I greatly rejoiced at the thought of having our own house. Castel Peleş, Uncle's summer castle, was a grand abode, but too overpowering for the country ; like the Bucarest palace, Castel Peleş had about it the quality of a cage. In his love for *Altdeutsche*, the style

so dear to the country of his birth, King Carol had over-decorated his royal residence, had put in gloomy stained-glass windows which shut Nature out; everything was heavily carved, heavily draped, heavily carpeted. There were some splendid old pictures, but the rooms and corridors were so dark that one could hardly see them, and what was really good in the way of furniture was drowned in an oppressive "too much" which made you almost giddy.

The general effect was rich, dignified, impressive, but the sombre papers, the untransparent glass, the gloomy hangings were not conducive to cheerfulness. As at Bucarest I could not feel at home in such heavy rooms; besides, everything seemed to have been planned to shut out the sky, the sun.

Uncle had no idea of the meaning of country life; he brought his town atmosphere with him to Sinaia; he brought his court, his politics, his military preoccupations, his audiences, his weighty discourses. But for all his solemn way of living this was a vast improvement upon Bucarest. Beyond the heavy doors, the painted windows, the dense curtains, lay the forest, the mountains, the meadows and the laughing little streams. This was not freedom, but the air that I drew into my lungs was like a draught of cold water; there was no dust, no noise, no tramways, no streets, and the fields were full of flowers.

Nando and I loved the flowers. Nando became the same Nando I had known at Coburg and Sigmaringen when I got him amongst the flowers; then he became young again, he could laugh and enjoy himself and had no more that painfully anxious look. Yes, how he loved flowers; this was a tremendous link between us, a bridge by which we could always reach each other amidst things that I did not understand.

To-day I can still conjure up before me the way he would hold flowers in his beautifully aristocratic hands; he had a special way of holding them, as though he did not want to hurt them. All through the years, the good and the bad years, he has brought me flowers with exactly that same gesture, handling them so tenderly, and each time he came to me thus, be it with a simple snowdrop or a precious orchid, it was like that first time at Munich when so shyly he brought

me that bunch of roses, holding them almost reverently as though to do them no harm. . . .

But in the evening he became Uncle's obedient nephew again and played billiards with him every single day, and I was supposed to find my amusement in watching their game whilst they asphyxiated me with the fumes of their heavy cigars.

Luckily at Sinaia the household took their meals with us, which was a change from the oppressive lunches and suppers at Bucarest where we had always been three, and foremost amongst the household was General Vladescu, my special friend with the long white moustache and mischievous eyes. General Vladescu was always able to make me laugh, though laughter in those days was dangerously near tears.

How I hated the click of those heavy billiard balls !

But now I am coming to a happy hour. So happy that to-day I still catch my breath merely at the thought of it.

Ducky was arriving. Ducky, my sister, my pal, my companion, my chum—Mamma was sending her to me. Mamma would be coming later for the great event, but Mamma had understood that I must not be allowed to mope too long, so she was sending on Ducky ahead. . . .

As children we had always scoffed at the idea that there could be tears of joy, but on this day of Ducky's arrival I understood the meaning of tears of joy.

We were to meet Ducky at Predeal, then the frontier. Nando and I were to drive out with the four Norwegian ponies, quite an excursion, and on the way home we would stop at a wee little monastery perched amongst the fir trees, just off the road, and there we would drink our tea.

This was exactly the right way to receive Ducky. Ducky would understand the charm of the thick-necked, cream-coloured ponies, understand the joy they were in my life. She would love the little old monastery and the mountains and especially the gorgeous meadows full of flowers.

And it all went off as it should; the train was punctual and the joy of meeting was such that it was akin to pain. Nando laughed his shy little laugh and he too was pleased to see Ducky. Nando was not jealous of our love for

each other, he was happy to have a sister. And as planned we drank our tea under the giant fir trees by the quaint little monastery with its toy-like church, whilst a trio of hoary monks, hands tucked into their wide sleeves, looked on at our little feast. They were primitive old recluses; they had not many words, but they gave atmosphere to the first picture Ducky was to have of the country which had become mine. . . .

The coming of Ducky put new life into my existence; even boresome things became interesting and everything was worth while. Ducky could see things from the same angle as I, she understood what was unbearable, what was funny, what was pathetic; we were still ignorant little fools, our judgment was not worth much, but blood is thicker than water and there are certain things and their why and wherefore which only a sister or a brother, those who have been brought up with you, can understand.

Even the billiards did not matter any more; Ducky was there to tell me about home, to share things with me, so that even the clicking of those dreadful ivory balls had quite another sound. And Mamma had sent me all sorts of little presents, and every one of Ducky's words was a link with the past.



## *Chapter III*

### CAROL IS BORN

SUMMER slipped gradually over into autumn, the trees became an astonishing glory of rust, amber and gold, and in the first days of October Mamma came, bringing Sandra and Baby Bee.

Uncle was tremendously polite to Mamma, but it was not long before their two strong wills clashed. There was a Russian autocracy about Mamma which Uncle occasionally resented. Mamma was practical, high-handed, accustomed to manage and to rule ; she came into a house where there was no hostess and in which a family event was soon expected ; this gave rise to a certain amount of differences of opinions. Mamma and Uncle did not see eye to eye about doctors, nurses, and many other things. Mamma had had five children and knew all about it, but Uncle was accustomed to mix up politics with his daily bread. He saw deep problems in each smallest event, all things were to him weighty, full of pitfalls, he treated the smallest happenings as though they were insurmountable difficulties. Mamma had an imperial way of sweeping obstacles aside, quite indifferent to the opinion of others and not in the least comprehending with what care, ceremony and ponderation Uncle was surrounding the coming event. Even small events were magnified by this careful, judicious, prudent king, and the arrival of what might be the long-expected heir was no small event indeed !

Conflicts, discussions ; irony on Mamma's side, irritation on Uncle's, and between the two stood my poor Nando on tenterhooks.

I, the apple of contention, understood little about these controversies, and had my face anxiously turned towards

the trial before which I stood ; Mamma's cheery smile was like an anchor to which I clung.

It was only afterwards that Nando related to me the many episodes preceding the great event, and I understood the tragic comedy of the situation in which the poor young husband had been torn hither and thither between the conflicting forces, his common sense on Mamma's side, his loyalty on Uncle's, as nothing would ever make Mamma admit that Uncle need mix up politics with doctors, wet-nurses, dates, names, hours of the day and even rooms.

In later years, after my third child, I took the managing of things into my own hands ; it was more peaceful and little by little I had learnt to understand and respect Uncle's point of view. He had the right to be master in his own house. His rule was hard, so hard that it made a suffering instead of a joy out of youth ; he had no comprehension for the young, all was iron duty. But it was a good school, it hardened your moral muscles, and if you were made of strong enough stuff not to be broken, it put iron into your soul, preparing you for the vicissitudes, trials and renunciations of life. It also taught you patience. But it had one drawback ; having been just *too* hard, it made you vow within your heart not to inflict the same suffering upon your own followers, and thereby inclined you to too great leniency. . . .

The pendulum always swings back.

Grandmamma Queen in England, a mighty lady in her day, put an end to some of the controversies by sending an English doctor to assist her granddaughter in her trial.

"We want to be on the safe side," said Grandmamma, "so near the East you know . . . most uncertain. . . ."

In those days old Queen Victoria had her say everywhere and in everything, it was not in vain that she had ruled so long, and even Uncle bowed down before her might : "The Queen of England, Missy's Grandmother . . ." so Uncle submitted and the English doctor came, and on Sunday the 15th of October at one in the morning my first child was born, the heir so impatiently awaited, and they called him Carol after his great-uncle, and the re-

joining throughout the country was great. Curiously enough Carol was born on exactly the same date that twenty years before Mamma had given birth to Alfred, also her first-born.

There I lay in the great *Altdeutsch* bed exhausted, shaken, feeling very small, very helpless and dangerously near tears. What was this fearful battle I had been through? What did all that pain mean? But it was an astonishing moment of bliss when the living, flannel-swaddled bundle was laid in my arms. Was this really my child? And Mamma was there, bending over me and the expression of her dear round face reminded me of that last night at home before I set out for life. . . . And Nando, how pale he was! And Uncle, who came later, said that now I was like a soldier having been through fire.

But that curiously trapped feeling was still with me. All these events had happened outside myself, there were terrible forces at work quite beyond my control, I was continually being overruled, taken by surprise. Was Nature an enemy? Were human beings all in league with each other to keep me in the dark? And that pain, that dreadful pain?

"She had a very easy time," assured round little Doctor Playfair with a beaming face.

"An easy time—do they call that easy?" and I felt like turning my face to the wall, unwilling to take up a life again in which such pain could exist.

Mamma, however, was exactly the right person for cheering up a new mother: "Listen to the cannon," she said; "think of how delighted the people will be when they hear the hundred and one salutes." Faintly I heard the voice of the cannon and faintly I smiled. What the people felt was a matter of indifference to me; I had not yet discovered my people, they had been carefully kept from me. In those days I was certainly not *à la hauteur* of the event which had just happened; I had no idea that at this hour I was a very important person who had brought about a very important event.

Later, when I had become a responsible human being and had, so to say, taken my fate into my own hands, those

hours when, the battle over, I lay with the new little human soul clasped in my arms, listening to the royal salute, became hours of deep, conscious, almost sacred emotion. I felt that, at these hours, my country was listening with me, watching with me; I felt the heart of my people beating in mine, and mine in theirs. Yes, I have had in my time those joys. Little by little I had become a conscious patriot, a willing part of the great machine, and that feeling of love and unity with my people was for me a holy feeling which rendered effort, sacrifice, abnegation worth while. I was one in the great plan of things, a necessary entity, and, being as I am, the consciousness of this fact meant much to me. I was fundamentally rash, impulsive, uncalculating, but the law was within me, the law of equity, the law of just common sense.

But this came gradually, by living, after many struggles and much suffering and also, alas! many revolts, for I was not a tame, passive being; I had to find out things for myself.

But at this first birth Mamma was a precious necessity. I could hardly bear her to leave the room; she was so safe, so capable, and she was home; the home I had lost.

Unfortunately, my sisters were gone! Mamma had meant them to leave before the event. There had been very comic scenes with Baby Bee. Baby Bee had always been a child of exceptional intelligence. Being the youngest, Mamma guarded and adored her with special fervour, but for all that Baby Bee was a forerunner of the youth of to-day. In spite of all Mamma's love and care, Baby Bee generally outwitted her anxious parent and had most things her own way.

Mamma, true to her principles, did not wish her youngest offspring to know that a family event was expected. How she could ever delude herself with the hope that the keen-eyed child did not notice everything that was going on is incomprehensible.

So as to keep the unruly child out of harm's way, every sort of amusement was arranged for her; amongst others a pony had been procured upon which she was allowed to ride about to her heart's content. It was cheerful General

Vladescu who was chosen to be her companion, and she very much perturbed this kindly gentleman by urging her little horse up the stone steps of the castle terraces. Uncle used to witness these pranks from his windows; unaccustomed to children, he was kept in continual alarm. But the austere sovereign took a great fancy to this amusing and intelligent younger sister of mine. They became firm friends; he would take her for long walks in the forest, during which she gave him many a fright by climbing about in the most perilous places she could discover. Uncle used to hang on to the end of her short skirts so as to suppress her too great energies.

But the comic thing was that Baby Bee immediately spotted that something unusual was going on in the house and, in spite of the many enticements invented so as to lure her beyond the castle gates, it was each time a struggle to get her to go out. If some event of interest were to take place within, she certainly had no intention of missing it.

The baby was supposed to appear round about the 18th of October, so it had been decided that my sisters should leave on the 15th at midday. But at one o'clock that Sunday morning "the lovely new-coming little Crown Prince" put in his appearance, thus frustrating Mamma's carefully laid plots and playing into the hands of the child who was to have been kept in ignorance of what was going on!

Sister Baby was triumphant, but being in bed I did not witness the scenes which took place around the tiny cradle before my sisters were with many tears hurried away, none except Ducky having been allowed to see me.

Mamma remained some time longer at Sinaia, which was an enormous joy. She would read to me by the hour but also inquired much into my life and impressions. She was somewhat perturbed when she realized how exceedingly, abnormally dull was the life I was expected to lead. To her, as to me, it seemed unnecessary to mix up politics in everyday events, thereby complicating all things so exceedingly.

Mamma received many diplomats—Bülow, Gudehowski, Fonton, Sir Charles Hardinge; but Bülow was the one she liked best and he would come to her what we children con-

sidered much too often, because we disliked and mistrusted him, much to Mamma's indignation. "You are much too young to have any opinions," declared our parent; no doubt she was right, nevertheless we had the feeling that he was sneaky and not to be trusted. Children often have these instinctive dislikes.

Carol's christening took place with much ceremony on the 29th of October, my eighteenth birthday. I remember Mamma putting on all her magnificent pearls for the occasion. Orthodox christenings generally take place as soon as possible after the child's birth, the child having to be entirely immersed; it is easier done when they are quite small; mothers, according to tradition, never assist at the christening of their children, but if well enough receive congratulations after the ceremony is over. This was done in my case.

Decked out in a lovely tea-gown, all satin and lace, which Mamma had given me for the occasion, I was installed upon a couch in my room. My nurse and the two Louises fussed around me so that I should look my very best. The ceremony over, the little Christian was brought me and laid in my arms, and it was thus that my future subjects came to congratulate me and express their joy over the gift I had made to the country.

Many came: old Ministers and generals, important wives of important functionaries, and those of the court, also the servants. I felt proud and a little trembling, with my precious babe clasped in my arms, rather as though I had suddenly been given a living doll to play with, because this was not only Carol's christening but my eighteenth birthday.

From the very first, Carol was a big, healthy and exceedingly amiable baby; his coming made of course a great difference in my life; quite new horizons opened before me. I had now a mighty interest around which all my hopes and energies could centre.

Yes, God had been kind; He had allowed me at the very outset to satisfy the dearest desire of my people.

It were impossible to relate all my life, year by year; ten volumes would not suffice for all I remember of pain

and joy, for life is a slow proceeding and many events go to the building up of a soul, of a character.

Looking back, the seasons of my youth pass before me like pictures strung together, some full of hope and glamour, some dark with those stormy despairs peculiar to the young.

The central figure of our world was King Carol, that strong, quiet man, a master indeed, dominating all those dependent upon him; a man who planned and foresaw, who, having overcome his passions and crushed every personal desire, expected the same of others; a man who had forgotten that he had ever been young and who therefore had but scant understanding for those who, mere human beings, wanted to live and be glad.

I remember once, how after one of our conflicts (there were many, alas!) I had written him a letter full of revolt, begging him to remember that if my youth were stolen from me, nothing and no one could ever give me back the best years of my life. His answer had been short and to the point: "Only the frivolous consider youth the best years of life."

Such was *der Onkel*, and although in later years we became firm friends, even associates, from the very first, because of my character and education, we were destined to clash. My outward appearance was that of a tame little maiden with blue eyes and fair hair, but strong blood ran in my veins and I possessed a great instinct of self-preservation. Subconsciously I knew that I could not exist as a slave, that if I allowed my will to be broken I should never live to be any real good to the country which had become my destiny. From the very first it had to be give and take. For years we had to submit to what Uncle considered just demands upon our obedience, but which to us appeared to be tyranny, we had to tremble before his iron will; power was in his hands, we could but submit. Nevertheless, within possible limits, I remained unconquered and cut through my own way in spite of every defence and restriction.

Of course I made no end of mistakes, often behaved foolishly and exaggerated my troubles. All beginners of

life set out with the idea that happiness is their special right, the chief if not the only aim of existence, and they want to reach it in their own way; anyone or anything opposing this rush towards that luminous goal, becomes the enemy, the one to be overcome.

Uncle and I were fond of each other, but for all that we were opponents. His one object was to fit me into his scheme of things according to his conception of order and justice, while mine was to remain a free agent, to be my own master, to develop on my own lines a being with thoughts of her own, a life of her own.

I immensely admire German thoroughness; the mass result of German education is useful, but the spirit of absolute obedience crushing every individuality I personally could never submit to. I was too bubbling-full of life and imagination to follow a narrow, dull, uninspiring track so close behind the old king that his shadow blotted out the sun. I was ready to learn, but I also wanted to understand, to hold up my head and face life; I felt that I should never be able to give my best if treated as a prisoner, if my every movement and impulse were controlled, criticized and cut down to shape.

Having been intensely happy in my old home I wanted to bring some of that happiness into the new one. Every element for happiness was there—a young, loving husband, a beautiful and interesting country ready to take the young princess up into its heart, wide scope, every worldly advantage and a large horizon spreading out before us. And yet, all this was to be cramped, blighted, darkened by that curious faculty Uncle had of magnifying the importance of every act, every word, every meeting or parting, of every innovation. We were entirely hemmed in, controlled, overruled. We were never allowed to choose those who were to serve us, nor even in later years was it permitted that we should select those who were to bring up our children. There was fuss and endless discussion even over the most humble gymnastic-master and it seemed such a weighty affair to find a German who could give German lessons to our son that for years he was not taught to speak his father's language. We were never consulted, or if we were,



only *pro forma*, and such pressure was laid upon us that we could but agree to the choice already made beforehand. With a strange want of understanding, we were thus more than once obliged to accept in our household people entirely antagonistic to us, with whom it was a torment to live and who carried within them the seed of future disaster. These people were entirely beholden to Uncle and played in our household the part of informers, not to use a stronger expression; a household in which such species are rampant cannot, to put it mildly, be a comfortable household. Often I was unaware of the part these people were playing and trusted them, treated them as though they were loyal, was outspoken, unguarded, guileless, as it was quite beyond my simple conceptions that there could be people, seemingly pleasant, who betrayed you behind your back. One is not prepared for Iagos in one's own life. Little by little, however, I discovered that all sorts of humans "lived under the sun" and the discovery was distinctly unpleasant, but it did not shatter my belief in humanity. One faithful man outweighs a dozen traitors, and I have met with lifelong fidelities and towards these I look back with immense gratitude, whilst the others—they are best forgotten.

The birth of our second child, Elisabetha, came to pass before Carol was a year old, and it was round about this date that Queen Carmen Sylva returned to live amongst us and our daughter was given her name.

Carmen Sylva was also destined to play a great part in my life.

Well do I remember her arrival at Sinaia and how, after a great reception at the station, we all flocked to the monastery church for a solemn Te Deum. The Queen had not forgotten that she had been exiled for two years; Carmen Sylva never forgot. I remember with what a superbly royal gesture she mounted the steps of her high chair, the Queen's chair, opposite the King's. She was once more taking possession of it. She did this with tragic dignity; no one could ignore the tragedy of it, nor the tragedy which looked out from her deep-set eyes as she gazed down upon all those





MY HUSBAND WITH OUR FIRST CHILD, CAROL.

who had crowded to meet her and to bid her welcome home. What may have been her thoughts? How many of those, all smiles to-day, had kept faith whilst she was far away? Popularity is a treacherous thing, and the love of a people for its sovereigns is swayed by many winds; few resist howling with the wolves.

I could not keep my eyes off the Queen, she fascinated me as she had fascinated me the first time we had met. She was so entirely different from anyone else; romance clung to her, though to-day she was no more a white-clad invalid, painting strange flowers in her bed, surrounded by a weird company of poor relations, who had come to the lonely forest dwelling to be healed. To-day she stood upright and was very much alive; her movements were swift, energetic, with something uncompromising, almost defiant about them. Her attire was entirely unbecoming, for Carmen Sylva was without taste, but a strange force emanated from her, some hypnotism not easy to define.

My young eyes watched her anxiously; she had come to add a fourth to the strange trio we had been for over a year and a half, and she was certainly no negligible quantity; did her coming bode good or ill? Would she be a mother to me? Would she help me along my way? I was as ready as ever to adore, to admire; the fascination still held, but there was something quite uncompromising about her tread which made my heart beat uncomfortably. All through the years I knew her she had the habit of pacing her chamber like some great captive creature in a cage. If I can so express it, her tread was unresigned, there was a quality of revolt about it. Up and down, up and down, with a movement which swept you along with her, irresistibly if you would or not, you found yourself pacing beside her, listening to the many things she had to say whilst she held you under the charm of her golden voice. Ever was I more charmed by her voice than by the things she said, but her step had in it a restlessness almost as expressive as her voice—there was no peace in it and no repose.

Though she sang of forest, mountain, sea and river, she very seldom left the house, considering it to be waste of

time, and this was no doubt partly the reason why she so continually paced her chamber with that restless tread.

Certainly with the advent of Carmen Sylva my life became fuller and more exciting. Her personality was as great as King Carol's; they were direct opposites, ice and fire, but their manners were perfect and they were grand associates for the one and same cause.

Although she was so impulsive, so forceful, Uncle was very much the master. He admired his poet wife, was proud of her, but was disinclined to allow her imagination full sway, fearing it might lead her and him into difficulties, which it occasionally did, in spite of all his watchful authority.

"Aunty," as we called her, needed an audience; she had so much to say and said it so beautifully that she naturally wanted people about her who would listen and admire; she was therefore continually surrounded by an ecstatic circle of ladies hanging on her every word, and these were supplemented by artists, poets, musicians. Many interesting people came to Aunty, but there were also those who were merely insipid echoes, forming a chorus; these were irritating and occasionally gave to her salon a touch of the absurd.

Mamma had intended to be with me also for my second child's birth; but Elisabetha was in a hurry and appeared on October the 11th, 1894, before Mamma had time to arrive, so it was Aunt Elisabeth and a Roumanian doctor who were with me during my trial. Later, Dr. Cantacuzène and I became staunch friends, but in those days he was a stranger to me and I looked at him with eyes filled with fear. At this period my life appeared to be a series of perplexing and uncomfortable events. I had no real identity; people seemed to dispose of me according to their will and Nature laid incomprehensible traps. There were too many mysteries and secrets, nor dared I delve too deeply down into what was going on for fear of discovering unbearable facts.

Aunty, overcome by the poignant memories of her own maternity and of her many frustrated hopes, was much

agitated and moved by this family event, and kept exhorting me to realize that this was the most wonderful, glorious, blissful hour of my life. Torn to pieces by excruciating pain I could in nowise rise to the height of her enthusiasm and wept with longing for my mother, who only appeared on the scene a few days later. Her dear face and sober ways were like a safe haven after having been tossed on alien seas. I clung to her, needing the security of her quiet masterfulness, which brought everything back to the normal. Though both Mamma and Auntie had been brought up in an epoch when politeness was the supreme idol of the well-born, although they were both deeply educated and cultivated, they represented, so to say, two schools: the realistic and the romantic; they had vastly different conceptions of life, and although they never departed from their attitude of extreme amiability towards each other, I do not think they had much in common.

Auntie had the habit of discoursing unrestrainedly upon every subject, her poetic mind gilded every topic, she set herself no boundaries of speech; her public was a matter of indifference to her, everything could be said to anyone at any hour, in any place. She could be very amusing and yet she lacked humour, which my mother possessed in the highest degree. Looking back upon all this I realize how entertaining it must have been to listen to them, but in those days I was not yet ripe enough to be able to follow the humour of the situation though I instinctively felt a certain hostility beneath their polite conversation. Besides, Mamma never forgot that a young mother needed rest, but Auntie, who considered herself at home in my house, resented being reminded of the fact, which made the air somewhat electric; those two personalities together were too large for a sick-room.

Every day at a certain hour, Uncle came to see me as I lay with my new treasure clasped in my arms. He showed me great kindness and was much interested in his great-niece who was an adorable, wise-eyed, solemn-faced baby, but his topics of conversation were heavy and I have kept a certain memory of fatigue when looking back upon that second confinement. Everybody was being kind, attentive, but there

was a want of ease and quiet about it all which strained my nerves ; I felt different currents circling around me and being in bed put me at a disadvantage, I was, so to say, at the mercy of those who thought they had a right to mix up in my very young and newly established household. A great assistance to me during this time was my sister Sandra, then sixteen, but of a helpful, practical turn of mind. She kept watch for me and dearly loved our little Carol, playing a mother's part to him whilst I was laid up. All through life I have had a horror of those periods when I was set aside by sickness or confinement, when I had to give up, let others rule my house, dispose for me ; it nearly always ended in some sort of trouble. Being marvellously strong I was seldom laid up, but when it did happen to me I could not help looking upon it as a humiliation, a downfall ; you were delivered over into the hands of others, were at their mercy. Invalids are never told the truth ; once in a sick-bed you are beyond the pale, you are humoured, others rule for you, think for you, you are vanquished. I always hated being dependent, and that horizontal position, contrasting with the man vertically standing on his feet, bending over you, was a defeat in itself, a lessening of your personality, an admitted inferiority. I never liked giving my will over into other hands, never knowing where this surrender would end. If I had lived in an older-established country, I should have felt this less acutely, but in a new country one's every faculty is always needed all the time. Things do not run smoothly of themselves. It is continual effort only which keeps the ball rolling.

The quiet weeks I had hoped for with Mamma after my confinement, were, alas ! to be denied me as she had suddenly to leave for the Crimea where her brother, Emperor Alexander III (Uncle Sasha), lay dying in his palace of Livadia. An Imperial yacht came to fetch her at Constantza. It was hard to see her go, but she had the consolation of finding her brother still alive. He died a few days later.

Luckily I was much attached to my Russian nurse, Gunst, who had been with me during Carol's birth. She was clever and amusing, besides being a first-rate nurse.

My sister Sandra remained with me, which meant much to me as I was tired and my nerves were somewhat on edge ; the return of Queen Elisabeth had been a stirring event at a moment when I was not best fitted to endure the strain of violent emotions. Besides, Aunty had her own rather queer ideas about nurses and children and considered that I needed teaching and leading ; she had also to win back her lost authority and all these different excitements were not conducive to repose.

I remember an amusing scene when sister Sandra stood up manfully facing Uncle, declaring that I needed a holiday and that he must give me permission to go to Coburg for Christmas, where my father was now reigning duke. Uncle protested, saying that, as Aunty had just returned, this would make people talk, they would imagine that we did not get on well together ; it was essential that we should appear both of us at Bucarest ; there could be no parting just now. I dared not plead for myself, but Sandra had the courage of the innocent and spoke out all she felt : " But it is just a rest from all of you that she needs," she exclaimed, " or her nerves will go to pieces ! " Uncle's feelings can well be imagined, but I think he realized that " truth cometh from the lips of children and fools," so he finally gave way but on condition that I went first to Bucarest when the court moved from Sinaia, and that the children should remain with them whilst we were abroad.

Our whole youth was torn and tortured by cruel debates each time we wanted to move or travel, and the children were the chief apple of contention. Uncle and Aunt wished us to understand that the children were national property, they also wished to bring them up according to their ideas and to surround them with people chosen by themselves. This of course gave endless trouble, as we parents naturally claimed our rights. All this is ancient history, but the despair of it remains as an echo of something that the heart cannot forget. It was very difficult to stand.

But in spite of Uncle's iron rule, there were occasions when he had to let us go abroad, such as to assist at marriages, funerals, coronations, etc. No valid excuse could be found to prevent these outings, which came to



our secluded lives as a window suddenly opened in an airless room.

Both Ducky and Sandra followed my example ; they too married at the early age of seventeen.

Ducky had become exceedingly handsome ; she was tall, dark, with rather tragic grey eyes, and her character was firm and ripe for her age.

Grandmamma Queen, for sentimental reasons, ardently desired that she should marry our first cousin, the young Grand Duke of Hesse, son of her second daughter, Alice, who had died when he was a boy. Now his father was also dead and it was old Queen Victoria who mothered these grandchildren. The young Grand Duke was a pleasant, clever young man and a desirable *parti*. According to worldly appreciations this was a match which promised every hope of happiness. Our mother, always against marriages between first cousins, would have liked to oppose it, but in this case she was overruled by strong family feeling.

A tremendous gathering of important royalties came together for this occasion, including the Empress Frederick, the Kaiser, the Tsarevitch (later Nicolas II) and many other members of the Russian, English and German royal families, presided over by Grandmamma Queen in person, who shed her sober glory over the festivities.

This was of course one of the occasions when King Carol had to allow us to go abroad.

It was during this family gathering at Coburg, on the 20th of April, 1894, that Nicky, the future Tsar, became engaged to the Grand Duke of Hesse's youngest sister Alice, who later took the name of Alexandra when passing over to the Orthodox Church.

I saw very little of my beloved companion Ducky during these days of feverish excitement, nor had we much time to talk, but it was with a pang that we both realized that our ways were parting more and more.

In spite of Grandmamma's blessing and of the brilliant auspices under which this marriage took place, it was not destined to be a happy one and was dissolved by mutual consent in 1901.



MY SISTER VICTORIA, CALLED "DUCKY," JUST AFTER HER MARRIAGE.



On the same date, April the 20th, two years later, Sandra married Prince Ernest of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, and that same year, 1896, in the summer, we went to Moscow for the Coronation of Nicolas and Alexandra. The stupendous magnificence of these festivities is worth recording and I shall try therefore to describe them as I saw them with the eyes of a very young woman of twenty to whom it seemed, after the sober abnegation of King Carol's court, like suddenly stepping from the dark into dazzling sunshine.

## *Chapter IV*

### CORONATION OF NICOLAS II OF RUSSIA

THE glamour of those Coronation festivities is not easy to describe and there seems more than a lifetime between then and to-day when the glory of the Tsars is a thing of the past and the tragedy of Red Russia a ghastly reality and a danger to the whole of the civilized world. It is difficult to conceive that those three glittering weeks spent in Moscow were not a dream or visions imagined by a lover of fairy-tales. Yet they were real enough, and I lived them with all the ardour of my twenty years, and their enchantment was all the greater because of the exceeding austerity of my first three years in Roumania.

The doors of life seemed suddenly opened and all good things to pour over me like a golden stream; I was young and was considered pretty, and had come back to those of my kind; to those who could laugh, rejoice and be glad. That was how it all seemed to the little captive, to the one who had had to learn too many lessons all at once.

I was standing on a shining threshold looking out upon a stupendous pageant of which my uninitiated eyes saw only the glory.

I was not a very important part of the whole display, but I was given loving welcome; here I was not only on tolerance, but made much of, spoilt, admired, all good things were spread out before me, my hands seemed suddenly full of sunshine, it was ecstasy to be alive. My suppressed youth was taking its revenge.

Down there in the new country, I was in harness, I was merely a little wheel in a watch which was keeping Uncle's time but a little wheel which had to do its part, relentlessly, and no one tried to surround that part with any glamour or make it seem worth while; it was all work and no play, I

was with a vengeance the stranger in a strange land. Everything I did seemed always to be wrong and no one understood that when you were young and life runs like fire through your veins, you wanted to be gay sometimes, to laugh, be foolish with companions of your own age, to use your own faculties, to be a separate entity, someone with a mind of her own, with her own thoughts, her own habits, tastes, ideals, desires.

At Uncle's court everything was denied you, enjoyment was looked upon as frivolity, every word you said was an imprudence, your life was not your own, nor your house, nor your servants, not even your children! Everything was subservient to Uncle and his politics, his Ministers and more especially to a terrible old lady of his court whose tongue was like a "two-edged sword," and who looked upon me as an upstart dangerous to the old order of things. It were more poetical to say that I was the rising sun, but in those days of subjection I in nowise saw myself in such a glorious light.

And now suddenly the contrast of the Moscow Coronation! I felt like a bird, spreading its wings towards spring-time after a long heavy winter.

This was the mood I was in; the right mood in which to enjoy what was being offered to us.

Before leaving for this important ceremony Uncle had selected with particular care those who were to accompany us; they were mostly officers, but the King had added to our "suite" a certain old Colonel Georges Rosnovanu, who was well-known for his Russian sympathies. He had built a Russian church in his Moldavian village, loved the Tsar and everything pertaining to Russia, so Uncle had kindly thought of giving this enthusiastic old soul the glorious joy of seeing the Coronation. Uncle had these sudden inspirations of kindness, which helped to make him the big man which he undeniably was. Being an officer of the reserve, old Rosnovanu had had a beautiful "calaraş" uniform made for himself; dark blue with red braiding and when in full uniform, white trousers, and into this garb of his youth he not without difficulty compressed his portly proportions. He

had a high colour, a fleshy nose and wore long white whiskers and whenever he met one of the Grand Dukes he insisted upon giving him what he called "*le baiser slav*," the Slav kiss, which consisted of first a kiss on the right shoulder, then one on the left, the third again on the right. This he did each time with convincing ardour to the great amusement of my uncles.

The Imperial Russian court had put a house at our disposal, carriages, servants, military guard and every luxury characteristic of Russian lavishness. Several gentlemen had been attached to us and last, but not least, as in a real fairy-story, I had a young page to hold my train, to carry my cloak, to stand behind my chair during the great banquets, gala-representations or parades. He was a military cadet, would be officer next year. He was young and fair and we were exactly the same age. He was called Cherkessow, and also as in a fairy-story, quite rightly fell in love with the princess he was serving.

For many years Cherkessow used to write to me and I would answer or send him my latest photograph. Before going to the Russo-Japanese war he wrote me a last letter, sending me back all I had ever given him in case he should not return. He did not return; and the other day, looking through old papers, I found the touching little packet tied with neat ribbons which was all that remained of Cherkessow, my fair young page.

For Nando too this was a unique holiday. He too was young enough to revel in the enchantment of these wonderful festivities, but he could never give himself up as wholeheartedly to the joy of living as I could. He was ten years older, had been too much repressed, too severely trained, was too careful, too diffident, too shy. It was not without a certain anxiety that he watched the intensity of my delight; he knew the world better than I did, had fewer illusions and less belief in the absolute good faith of his neighbour. More than once Roumania had had to suffer from Russia's ruthless might and this kept Nando on his guard. Besides, this was *my* family, not his; he did not feel as at home as I did, nor was it exactly easy to hold one's own with all my uncles and cousins. There were so many of them, they were so enor-







"DUCKY" AND I WITH OUR PAGES.

mous, so sure of themselves, so wealthy and powerful, real autocrats, not particularly careful about other people's feelings ; besides, as before mentioned, my Russian relations were merciless teasers, their voices dominated everybody and everything as did their huge size ; a mighty breed in fact !

The younger generation were of less imposing stature, they no longer incorporated the real type of the autocrat, there was a disparity between their physique and their power. They seemed less well cut out for their part.

This was particularly evident in the Tsar, who was small, almost frail-looking. His eyes were kind, had a caressing expression, there was something gentle about him and his voice was low-pitched and soft. Although perfectly dignified he was somewhat dwarfed by the giants of his father's and grandfather's generation. But in those days his family was absolutely loyal to him, they looked up to him as the supreme head before whom all bowed down without questioning in spite of his youth. He was imbued with mystic power : he was the Tsar. This no one forgot. He was young, had married a beautiful princess as young as he was, and life stood open before him ; many empty pages upon which he could write history.

The first ceremony we witnessed was the Tsar's solemn entry into Moscow. The young Imperial couple had made a retreat of several days in a monastery beyond the walls of the city so as to prepare themselves in all humility for the coming sacrament.

On the day she became Empress, Alice of Hesse, having been given the name of Alexandra, went over from the Protestant to the Orthodox faith and reverently submitted to its every dictate. How far convinced she was in those days it is difficult to say, but in later years, as we know, she became a fanatical daughter of the Russian Church.

What a wonderful sight it was, that solemn entry into Moscow, into that legendary city where from earliest times the Tsars were crowned ! We guests who took no active part in this particular ceremony, looked on from several balconies overhanging the principal street through which the procession passed.

Here comes the Tsar, well to the fore on a tall white horse. He is not clad in gorgeous apparel but in the simple dark green uniform all are accustomed to see him wear, on his head the round tight-fitting astrakhan cap, characteristic of the Russian army. His breast is barred by the light blue ribbon of St. Andrew, on the dark cloth a few diamond stars flash in the sunshine. There is nothing magnificent about his attire, nor is there anything particularly imposing in his bearing, but he sits his horse with the ease of a good rider. He is small but, as before mentioned, his eyes are kind and there is a gentle, almost wistful smile on his lips. In his bearing there is the quiet dignity of one deeply conscious of all he represents at this solemn hour, deeply conscious also of the heavy duties he is taking upon himself. All our eyes follow him; he is young, he is loved and life lies open before him like an unwritten book.

Two golden coaches follow him at a small distance, magnificent vehicles, such as children picture to themselves in fairy-stories, white horses, glittering trappings, pages, followers. In the first sits his mother, in the second his wife.

On the top of the Dowager Empress's closed carriage shines a crown, a sign that she has already stood a crowned woman before her people, that earthly power is already hers. On her head she wears an almost fantastically gorgeous tiara, her neck is one mass of glittering jewels, her gown and her mantle are of shining gold. Still very popular, still a good-looking woman, she bows to the right, to the left, with that charm peculiar to her family.

The second coach is not crowned and the woman who sits within, though sumptuously attired, has no crown on her head, for only after the Sacrament does she enter into her rights; it is the Empress-mother who to-day still has precedence, and with it all crowned rights.

Much more handsome than her mother-in-law ever was, she sits magnificently upright, but she does not smile and her expression is one of almost painful earnestness. There is a tightness about her lips which is disconcerting in one so young. There is no happiness in the large steady eyes, none of youth's buoyancy in her attitude, none of the sweetness and confidence one expects in a young bride. It is as

though she were holding Fate off at arm's-length, as though darkly guessing that life might be a foe, she must set out to meet it sword in hand. She is fully aware of the solemnity of the moment, of all she represents, but it seems to awake dread in her rather than joy.

The golden coach passes, heads are uncovered before the uncrowned brow ; she bows very low in response to the homage offered her. She is young, beautiful, dignified, but no smile softens her lips, she looks into no man's eyes but straight before her as though keeping her gaze fixed upon some inner vision—and yet for her also, life stands open like an unwritten book.

All through the many ceremonies, the young Empress never relaxed this severely aloof attitude which was in part, no doubt, timidity. Nothing ever seemed to give her pleasure, she seldom smiled, and when she did it was grudgingly as though making a concession. This of course damped every impulse towards her. In spite of her beauty no warmth emanated from her ; in her presence enthusiasm wilted. Serious, earnest-minded, with a high sense of duty and a desire towards all that is good and right ; she was nevertheless not of "those who win" ; she was too distrustful, too much on the defensive, she was no warming flame. Life, like all else, needs to be loved ; those who cannot love life are vanquished from the very start.

How well I can still see Alexandra standing in all her glory, side by side with the Emperor in the golden cathedral in which they were to be crowned. The very atmosphere seemed golden, a golden light enveloped the glittering assembly come to render homage to these youngest amongst the sovereigns of Europe, golden also were Alexandra's robes. All eyes were fixed upon her ; a beautiful woman is always a source of interest and how much more so when she stands, crowned before all eyes, a figure apart, raised above her sisters, anointed, imbued with a glamour few ever achieve. And Alexandra was beautiful, she was also tall and dignified, actually dwarfing the Emperor standing beside her. The heavy vestments he wore seemed to overwhelm him, the prodigious crown of his ancestors to be too heavy for his

head ; instinctively one remembered the giant stature of those gone before him ; his face was pale, but there was the light of the mystic in his eyes. But his young wife stood steadily upright, her crown did not appear to crush her, and the golden flow of her mantle, cascading from her shoulders, made her appear even taller than she was. Her face was flushed, her lips compressed ; even at this supreme hour no joy seemed to uplift her, not even pride ; aloof, enigmatic, she was all dignity but she shed about her no warmth. It was almost a relief to tear one's gaze from her to let it rest upon the Emperor, whose caressing eyes and gentle expression made every man feel his friend.

An impressive ceremony, in a gorgeous setting, the air athrob with chants so solemnly beautiful that they were almost unearthly. They rose and swelled, filling the church with such mighty waves of harmony that one's heart felt like bursting, but when the strain became next to unbearable, the volume of sound would gradually decrease, almost dying away into a whisper ; and a great peace, which was a strange blending of joy and pain, would flood the soul and one was as though released. Through a fragrant haze of incense, mysterious rituals were taking place ; it was more like a dream than reality. With slow movements grandly vested priests moved hither and thither, hands raised in gestures of prayer or benediction. Their robes were in tone with those of the saints who, with heavily haloed faces, looked down from their walls upon the great of this world. Wherever the eye rested, gold, nothing but gold, with here and there the flash of a precious stone, red, blue or green. All faces were dim in this atmosphere of solemn expectation, they had taken on something of the immaterialness of the frescoed saints. Alone the figures of the Emperor and Empress stood out with symbolic significance, two shining apparitions imbued for an hour with transient glory. And the thousand tapers reflected in the glittering *iconostas* were like stars in God's Heaven.

The church ceremony over, the newly crowned couple in solemn procession ascended the broad steps of an outward stairway leading to a terrace overlooking the cathedral square.

Up, up, over the gorgeous carpet flowing like a scarlet river down towards them, up, up, the dazzling company of their royal guests in their wake, up, up, ever up, as though ascending towards the skies, and having reached the top they turned to face the multitude which had been allowed into the square so as to look upon the newly anointed. Side by side they stood, two diamond-crowned figures at the zenith of their glory, deities, almost, and with the movement of a wave rolling in to shore the people fell to their knees before them, calling God's blessing down upon their crowned heads. A grand sight, a moment of tense, almost supernatural, emotion; and this was in Moscow, in springtime, the air full of the perfume of lilac and of the songs of birds. And the sun pouring down upon the scene was as golden as the Imperial coronation robes!

Moscow! Ancient city of the Tsars, to-day the city of Lenin and Trotsky, of Jerjinski and Stalin. To-day the golden cathedrals are forsaken and on the great square before the Kremlin stands a weird monument in which are exposed the remains of one who in his turn had become something of a deity. In a glass-covered coffin he lies, in a red-draped chamber, so that all men can look upon his sinister countenance. In silent troops the eternally deceived people pass before his ugly mask of tyranny, now frozen in death. That face is no pleasant sight, but the people who have been told he was a saviour, a deliverer, continue to pass before his embalmed body, expectant, patient, deluded; pass and pass, little caring that the carpet which flowed beneath the great repudiator's feet had been a river of blood instead of the scarlet cloth the Tsar had once trod. And who cares to-day that the adored idols of yesterday, with their five innocent children, are now a charred heap of bones in far Siberia? But even those charred bones were granted no rest. It was not sufficient to chop the mutilated remains of the victims to pieces with a butcher's axe specially sharpened for the occasion, but these remains were cast into the shaft of a forsaken mine, and for fear that the work of annihilation should not be complete enough, hand grenades were thrown down upon them in their horrible grave!

Thus ended the last of the Tsars and his family, but this was but an incident and the people continue to pass in endless file before the hideous grimace of Lenin, still hugging to themselves the threadbare illusion that he had been the prophet of a new golden age, the liberator from the tyrannies of the past.

On the jewelled walls of the now silent Coronation Cathedral the frescoed saints with their heavily haloed heads are gradually paling. Chants ring no more through the vaults, no incense mounts towards the golden cupolas, but peering down on this emptiness the saints seem to be straining their ears, listening, waiting . . . for what? Are they not also ghosts of the past? What matter if their gaunt figures fade quite away? What do they still represent? Who needs them to-day? What is the good of listening? For what are they waiting? What could they hear now but ribald song, curses, whispered denunciations and the smothered sound of weeping?—for in this land of new freedom man has no right even to his tears.

But, unwilling to admit that they have been taken in, the Old and the New World in incomprehensible blindness still try to cling to the forlorn illusion of a new message come from the East.

But having been witness of that Coronation day, I can still see before me the vision of that sun-flooded terrace with those crowned figures standing like two deities facing their people, and their people, believing in their glory, sinking down before them on their knees.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the festivities which took place during those three weeks in May; there were parades, processions, balls, banquets and occasional family meetings, but these were rare, as most of the ceremonies were official.

An interesting sight was the solemn receptions of the many deputations come from the four corners of the vast Empire.

Decked in gorgeous apparel, surrounded by the Imperial Family and their royal guests, the Tsar and his wife received the homage of many quaintly garbed envoys from the North,



*Thine  
1896.*

THE EMPEROR NICOLAS II. IN 1896.





South, East and West of their mighty realm. Slit-eyed Tartars, mysterious-looking Chinese, slim-waisted Circassians, Lapps, Finns, and many picturesque personages strangely reminiscent of the Thousand and One Nights, and all these differently complexioned deputies brought gifts to lay at the feet of the young sovereigns. Dusky sables, snow-white ermines, gold and precious stones, rare cashmeres, costly carpets and richly rippling brocades, many-coloured, of rare texture and exquisite design, shimmering veils and glittering embroideries, gift-bearers in endless file, resembling the classical procession of the biblical Three Kings from the East. Then in turn came deputies of the Army and Navy, of the Church, the nobles, the peasants, and finally an endless stream of ladies in Russian court-dress which gave such special colour and picturesqueness to all Russian court ceremonies.

These were fatiguing ordeals for the Emperor and Empress, and I can still see how Alix's never very happy face became more and more pathetic as the hours lengthened and the stream of congratulations never seemed to come to an end.

I was at an age when everything enchanted me and dress in itself was a great pleasure. I thoroughly enjoyed decking myself out in all my fine clothes specially made for the occasion. I had dresses in every colour of the rainbow and although to-day they would appear absurd to us, at that time they were supremely *chic* and chosen with great care. But the attire in which I reaped my greatest success was a gown and court mantle Queen Carmen Sylva had given me. The poet-queen, inspired by my extreme youth, by my fair hair and blue eyes, had declared that she must make of me a real fairy-princess. So she ordered a dress and court train which were entirely embroidered with trailing branches of wild roses, the background covered with a thousand falling petals; even the veil, which I wore beneath a circular crown of diamonds, was strewn with rose petals. This dress, worked in one of our Roumanian schools, was certainly very becoming and I was immensely elated by the effect it made, and it can well be imagined that so many roses on a royal mantle could not leave my fair young page quite indifferent; each

day of service became more precious and the final hour of parting was heart-rending !

People used to say to me : " We like to see you pass, you look so happy, and always seem to be thoroughly enjoying yourself." This was exactly true ; I was enjoying myself with all my heart, in fact the joy of it all, the glamour, the beauty, the atmosphere of constant admiration which surrounded me, had slightly gone to my head. My suppressed youth and spirits were responding almost dangerously to all this spoiling and adulation. Russians catch fire easily, and Slav tongues are soft. Besides, it was my first revelation of that power which is woman's power and the discovery was pleasant. This was indeed an inebriating contrast to the life I led at Uncle Carol's court, and the perfume of the incense burnt before me was decidedly sweet. I was too young to know that " all is not gold that glitters." As yet I had learnt no philosophy ; to me all outward appearances were real and all declaration true.

One cruel event, though, marked with scarlet streak these sumptuous days in Moscow. A huge popular feast had been planned upon the field of Klodinsky just beyond the town, where village folk in great numbers were to be fed and clothed. Souvenirs with the Tsar's portrait were to be given to each so as to carry his effigy into the farthest parts of the realm.

The newly crowned couple, accompanied by their many royal guests, were to go in great pomp to look on at the distribution of these gifts to thousands and thousands of peasants called together from every part of the great Empire.

By some fault of organization a frightful crush took place, the multitude all rushing at the same moment towards one point. Thousands of men, women and children lost their lives on this day which was to have been a day of rejoicing and good cheer. It became instead a bloody disaster as sinister as a battlefield. This mournful event very naturally cast a shadow over all the ceremonies and festivities which were still to follow. Alexandra, always inclined to melancholy, was of course cruelly impressed by this tragic happening, and voices were heard whispering that it was a bad omen for the reign that had just begun.



THE EMPRESS ALEXANDRA (ALIX).



That night there was a ball at the French Embassy. I remember that the poor Empress did all in her power to try and have it put off, begged to be allowed to abstain from any festivity that night, but in vain : France was Russia's chief ally, she must not be offended ; tremendous preparations had been made for the monarchs' reception, they would have to go. Such is the life of crowned heads. They must crush their natural impulses, control their emotions, nor is it ever permitted to them to weep their own tears. No doubt many that night considered the Empress heartless because she went to a ball on the evening of the great disaster, yet God alone knows how much rather she would have stayed at home to pray for the dead !

The Grand Duke Serge, then Governor of Moscow, was held by many to be responsible for this fearful misfortune, and beautiful Aunt Ella's despair was pitiful to see ; but the festivities had to go on. One Embassy after the other gave brilliant receptions, the great Powers vying with each other in pomp and splendour. But though magnificently arranged, nothing was more dismal than that ball at the French Embassy ; everybody felt that it ought to have been put off.

For all official processions the royal guests were paired off in couples according to precedence. It was Victor Emmanuel, then Crown Prince of Italy, who fell to my share. We were not particularly well matched as I was a good deal taller than he was. He was conventionally polite without being specially amiable or attentive. Abrupt of speech, he spoke in short, hacked sentences, his lower jaw jutting out somewhat pugnaciously. We had not overmuch to say to each other, but I was interested in a dawning romance between him and his future wife, Princess Helen of Montenegro, who made special friends with me because of my cavalier. On all occasions she would seek my company, pretending to be jealous of me. I soon understood the meaning of this innocent little subterfuge and that *I* was not the real attraction. Helen was a tall, handsome girl with superb eyes and pleasant ways, she was both vivacious and amusing and not at all shy. Her old father, the Prince of Montenegro, was also amongst the guests, most conspicuous in his picturesque dress. Politically

he played a very special part and was treated with marked civility. I have no clear remembrance of how at that time young Victor Emmanuel met the advances of the vivacious princess. I liked her very much, there was something fresh and spontaneous about her; she had, so to say, retained a whiff of the breezes of her mountain home, which my mother had so interestingly described in her letters.

Ducky, in those days Grand Duchess of Hesse, belonged to the inner circle, her husband being brother of the Tsarina and of beautiful Aunt Ella in whose house they lived. Our chief object, however, was to come together as much as possible; to share things still heightened our pleasure in life. Ducky and I were striking contrasts, I so fair and she so dark and somewhat sombre and melancholy, whilst I was gay and always amused. Being both of us gloriously young we had a large following of admirers. Our cousin, Boris Vladimirovitch, became one of my great friends. About two years my junior, he was still quite a boy and his fervent homage was dear to me. Gay or sulky by turns, he had an attractive rather husky voice, kind eyes and a humorous smile which crinkled his forehead into unexpected lines. Not exactly handsome, he had nevertheless great charm, and a slight lisp added a certain quaintness to his speech. I used to imitate his lisp, which never offended him. Our friendship lasted many years. Later, when become over-sophisticated, a man disillusioned by too easy pleasures and success, he would occasionally declare with a deep sigh that I had been the first love of his life. The sigh was the genuine sigh of one who, too rich and too spoilt, had in a short time travelled far from the first clean ideals of his early youth. "But you, Missy dear," he declared with his gentle lisp, "have always remained a lovely dream and I thank you for having remained a dream I never destroyed." Dear Boris; born with ideals he was too lazy to stick to, he remained ever unsatisfied. Later he went astray, was always seeking for a happiness he never quite found; but we were real friends and the remembrance of him stands amongst the emotions it is good to look back upon. We none of us in those early days knew anything of life; it lay so dazzling before us, it looked so fresh, so easy, so happy, so clean.

As through a mist of tears I see all those many faces who shared our joy and fun, they all pass before me ; I murmur to myself half-forgotten names and they awake in me an echo of the old thrill of emotion. One's heart beat so easily in those days ! Most of them were officers, brilliant, dashing, sentimental, daring, full of Russian ardour mixed with that almost intolerable melancholy so characteristic of the Slav, a melancholy which tore at your heartstrings and disturbed your peace. How many of those gay cavaliers are still of this world, I wonder ? How many have escaped the horror of war and Russia's downfall ? Gadon, Efimowitch, Schlitter, Zedler, Junkowski, Grahe Etter, Belaief, Hartory and so many more whose bright eyes and enthusiastic homage made our joy more sparkling, more intense.

*Vorbei !* as also our youth and that mad irresponsible gaiety is a thing of the past, dead with a time which has been wiped off the face of the earth. But the memory remains like a dwindling light shining at the far end of a long passage, a light from which we are retreating farther and farther into shadow. Youth, the glad season of life ;—youth, “the breezy call of incense-breathing morn.”

To recover from the fatigues of the Coronation festivities, Uncle Serge had invited the young crowned couple to go for a few weeks' rest to his country place, Ilinsky, near Moscow, the same place where poor young Alix, Uncle Paul's wife, had died a few years previously. A gay company followed in their train.

The more official guests had departed ; only the closer members of the family remained and an inner circle of friends. But Ilinsky being too small to house so many, those who could not find room there were invited by Prince and Princess Usupoff to Archangelsky, their palatial country residence near by. Nando and I were amongst these. Archangelsky was a small Versailles without the Occidental varnish, it was overflowing with riches but there was a touch of Oriental neglect about its splendour.

Lavish hospitality and good cheer ; a Roumanian gipsy band, horses to ride, boats on the river, carriages of every size and shape, dancing, picnics, moonlight suppers and end-



less *parties de plaisir*, visiting other country houses in the neighbourhood, and at all hours of the day and night the wild, wailing, laughing, sobbing gipsy melodies accompanying our every move; ravishing music vastly adding to the emotional excitement of those somewhat irresponsible days.

Our hostess was still young and an exceedingly attractive woman. Her grey eyes were luminously clear and intense, her smile enchanting; her hair, smoothly drawn back, left her forehead bare, which was unusual in those days of fringes and frizzled coiffures. An attractive woman full of kindness, eager to spread joy around her. Her husband was somewhat heavy, but he too was kind and his hospitality knew no limit. The Zumarokow Usupoffs belonged to the richest families of Russia.

Nando and I were continually driving over to Ilinsky, followed by a troop of the Archangelsky guests. Amusement followed amusement, it was a period of buoyant, almost mad gaiety, a giddy whirl of enjoyment, few of us except Nando ever pausing to think. Nando was somewhat appalled by the pace we were going and kept remembering how little Uncle would approve of this sort of life. I am sorry to say that for the time being I had absolutely shaken off King Carol's shadow, and did not wish to remember that all this glorious folly was transient and would soon have to come to an end.

Amongst the guests at Archangelsky was a certain Prince Wittgenstein, officer in the Cossacks of the Imperial Guard. This young man was one of the gayest of the gay. Although not specially good-looking, he had a magnificent figure with a waist as slim as a woman's. The long Cossack caftan suited him to perfection. When not on service the officers had permission to wear this caftan in whatever colour they preferred. Young Wittgenstein affected a dull dark plum, which seemed to have been chosen with special cunning, being a colour which both attracted and satisfied the eye. His heelless, high, soft, leather boots gave a feline quality to his tread. To complete the picture we may add a tall fur cap set at a rakish angle, a gorgeous dagger stuck into his silver belt, and he stands before us a figure worthy of

Elinor Glyn's most dashing romances, a personage well suited to sow disquiet in feminine hearts.

I never had much to do with young Wittgenstein, but being a keen rider he appreciated my horsemanship. He soon discovered that, when in the saddle, nothing could daunt me, that on horseback I was fearless and inclined to recklessness; in this we saw eye to eye.

Wittgenstein was the possessor of a wild, unkempt, fierce-looking Cossack horse. Dark brown with flowing tail and mane, he had iron sinews and an anxious eye. Untrained and fidgety, he was reputed to be a difficult mount, and was in fact exactly the sort of horse which you would expect young Wittgenstein to ride. Inevitably the hoped-for moment came when he proposed that I should try this exciting animal, which he declared could beat at a trot any other horse at full gallop; Nando protested, endeavouring to put in a veto, to use his authority; but in vain, I was just then, alas, not inclined to docility, and the thought of riding this wild horse was my supremest ambition.

That ride remains one of the most glorious memories of my youth, there was a thrill about it which I have never been able to forget. The moment I was on his back that untamed horse and I understood each other absolutely and I was ready to accept any wager. I was given a few hundred yards' start and then off flew all the other riders in wild pursuit. What a race that was! A glorious morning, the sky full of the song of larks, the dew still on the ground. Straight as an arrow ran my horse, steady as a torpedo on its course. The pace we went brought tears to my eyes, but never once did that astonishing animal break from a trot to a gallop.

Having reached the point set as our goal, I remember turning my horse to face the onrush of my pursuers who came pounding up the small hillock on which I stood awaiting them. Cheers and exclamations! I had won my bet and bending down I threw my arms round my horse's neck and kissed him in exultant gratitude. Oh, how I longed to carry off that priceless trotter, to take him back with me to Roumania! But this supreme joy was not granted me.

As can well be imagined, Mamma, who was at Ilinsky,

looked on at our amusements with a certain disapproval. She continued to be chief censor of our lives, her eye was all-seeing, her word law, and her dissatisfaction when expressed was never lightly set aside.

During the Coronation festivities she had kept Ducky and me in severe order, often thoroughly disapproving of our clothes. Her withering criticism of the way we wore our veils under diadems, which she considered too picturesque and not orthodox enough, still makes my cheeks burn. She declared we wanted to look like Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, and in this perhaps she was not far wrong, as the style of clothing of that luckless lady was certainly amongst our ideals. But Mamma declared our tendency towards picturesqueness "affectation," and when we knew she would be present, we had to refrain from too much artistic imagination. A quite unexpected ally was however found in the oldest grand duchess of the family, Aunt Sari, Mamma's aunt, widow of the Grand Duke Constantine, one of Alexander II's brothers. A great *élégante* in her day, she still took pleasure in dress, knew what was becoming, and appreciated our efforts to beautify our attire. Hearing Mamma scold us she exclaimed: "Let the children look as nice as they can; I like to see the young have ideas of their own and your daughters seem to have taste." Aunt Sari *certainly* had taste. In the Coronation church she stood out an unforgettable figure; exceedingly tall and still astonishingly upright for her age, her hair was snow-white; clothed from head to foot in silver she wore a sparkling diadem like frosted sunrays on her *cacoshnic*. Having a too great wealth of pearls to wear them *all* round her neck, she had fixed half a dozen ropes at her waist with an enormous diamond pin; they hung down along her gown in a milky cascade. She was so pale and shining white that seen against the golden walls of the cathedral she seemed to be covered with hoar-frost. Though she was near upon seventy, or even older, I remember her more vividly than anyone else, excepting, of course, the Empress and beloved Aunt Ella.

Brother Alfred was also at Ilinsky, and one day swimming in the river he saved me at a moment when I thought I was going to drown. Unaccustomed to swim in a stream,

I had not counted on the current, which suddenly began to swirl me away. Alfred gave me a helping hand at a critical moment.

Uncle Serge was an excellent host. He wanted everybody to have a good time, but like Mamma, he was severe and critical, whilst Uncle Paul was our great defender when Mamma accused us of frivolity. “*Laisse-les, c’est si bon de les voir s’amuser, sait-on ce qui leur réserve la vie, on n’est jeune qu’une fois!*” and I remember going up and kissing him. Dear Uncle Paul, he had such a pleasant voice and he was never unkind to anyone, and what a beautiful figure he had! The two brothers Serge and Paul were devoted to each other, but they were a great contrast, the one severe almost to fierceness, the other gentle, easy-going and forgiving. I dearly loved them both.

## Chapter V

### BACK TO ROUMANIA

AT last the cruel hour for parting sounded ; somewhat relieved, I believe, Nando tore me away from these too congenial surroundings. My leave-taking was tearful ; I well realized that this was an episode that could never be lived over again. Good-bye to Ducky, to Mamma, to all my admirers, to beautiful Aunt Ella, to the uncles and cousins *and* to the beloved Cossack horse.

We were given an Imperial train and very slowly we travelled through vast Russia down to Odessa, where a Roumanian ship fetched us. Here we parted with those who had been attached to us during all of our stay. It was the end of the dream.

As can be imagined, the return to duty and abnegation was not easy. This was *lendemain de fête* with a vengeance. Everything seemed small, dull, shabby, cramped, uninteresting ; life flat, prospects colourless. The only real joy was to see my babies again ; but after a long parting even one's children seem little strangers ; besides, Aunt Elisabeth, profiting by my absence, had been busily making propaganda on her own behalf. There was also an enemy in the camp, Cousin Charly.

For many years in succession Charly came to Sinaia in the autumn season. Having been the chief promoter of our marriage, she felt that she had a right to profit by the results. Certain members of the family who had had to suffer from Charly's want of sincerity declared that Charly always had to have a king "up her sleeve." It used to be the old King of Saxony, later it was the King of Sweden, but for the time being, to my detriment, it was King Carol, and Roumania became her hunting-ground. I had not yet a firm footing in my new country ; Aunt, after her exile,

had to win back her popularity and Charly knew how to use cleverly the existing circumstances to her own advantage. Now that she could no more patronize me, it did not suit her that I should make headway too rapidly, nor too easily.

Indignation meetings against me were held in the palace. Charly headed these and found a strong ally in the old lady, already once mentioned, who played the part of chief inquisitor. My faults and failings were discussed and deplored; she drew Uncle and Aunt's affection away from me to herself, and I was seldom in favour whilst she was throned in Castel Peleş. Outwardly she was sweet, affectionate, remembering old jokes from home, speaking to me about Mamma, about my sisters, but behind my back she was pulling me to pieces with that sweet voice once so dear to me. Her husband, Bernhard Erbprinz of Saxe-Meiningen, came with her; she never liked him, but for all that he was devoted to her and he imagined she was the most perfect of wives, which shows how clever she was. Both passionate soldiers, Uncle and he would discuss military questions by the hour, but the King preferred still more talking politics with irresistible Charly who had for him unlimited prestige, although Uncle in general had none too good an opinion of feminine intelligence. Charly's clever way of seeming to know everything better than anyone else, of being initiated into the most hidden secrets of State; her soft, insinuating, gentle manner, had quite taken him in; he accepted all she said as Bible truth, and it was greatly owing to Charly's intrigues that King Carol's animosity against the Emperor William was kept alive. Charly had a grudge against her brother and was glad to do him a bad turn whenever she could. In praise and in calumny, Charly's voice was equally low-pitched and sweet. Wise as he was, Uncle could just be caught by his belief in the over-importance of politics. Each thing was to him "an affair of State," and Charly knew cleverly how to pander to this peculiarity of his, so that he became her dupe. Nando and I hated to see him being thus deceived; we knew Charly better than Uncle did, but we were not in a position to open his eyes.

I do not feel that Auntie ever really cared for Charly ; she was not exactly jealous, but accustomed to being the oracle, the one who talked and was generally religiously listened to, she did not particularly relish taking a back seat whilst Charly perorated. Not well up in politics, Carmen Sylva resented being left out in the cold whilst her wise husband discussed deep world problems with their much younger and undeniably attractive guest. But when it was a question of criticizing me and my young *ménage*, then they understood each other all too well.

I was exceedingly lonely in those days. It was still considered dangerous that I should have friends, and I could not really get accustomed to this atmosphere so overruled by political considerations, and Charly, established as a favourite, cleverly understood how to show me up in the most unfavourable light.

I never seemed to be able to gain the approval of "the Old Palace" as we called the Royal Court ; I was considered too English, too free and easy, too frivolous, I was too fond of dress, of riding, of outdoor life, I was too outspoken, I had not enough respect for conventions or etiquette.

Though passionately maternal, I was considered too young and too foolish to have the right of directing my children's education. I was sometimes very unhappy, and Nando's plea for patience on my side and ever again patience, was not particularly comforting ; there was a great feeling of emptiness and nothing to hold on to, no one to turn to for help.

In my house there was, however, a motherly soul who, though humble, was a real comfort, and that was old Nana, the children's nurse. Miss Green was a figure worthy of Dickens. Broad of girth, loud-voiced and jovial, she did not mince her words ; possessor of a perfectly clean conscience, she feared no man, and the fact that she had already served several royal families, both in England and Russia, gave her a certain prestige. She knew all my relations on both sides, and this in itself was a link.

I have seen old Green stand up bravely before stern King Carol, arms akimbo, and give him, in atrocious French,

a piece of her mind when she considered that "the Palace" had been unfair to her beloved princess. Never had woman stauncher defender than I had in old Nana. Her belief in me was absolute, and many a time when feeling too completely forsaken and misunderstood, I have laid my head upon her ample bosom to sob out all my grief.

I am ashamed to say that there were times during these early years when I absolutely wallowed in my misery. Though generally gay and optimistic, I have known *Weltschmerz* of the most poignant kind.

Old Green was an antidote; she would begin by weeping with me, then with a loud sniff she would put tears aside and take repossession of her broad good-humour. Patting me on the back she would urge me to cheer up, and would launch forth upon one of her endless yarns about one or the other of the royal children who had been her charges. Her stories were enhanced by pantomimic play; she was most expressive, and if not orthodox, her language was certainly picturesque. At times even, I was thoroughly admonished, as though I too were but a child. Nando also came in for his share of scolding, and if the truth were told, both he and Uncle stood slightly in awe of old Green. Auntie frankly detested her; Nana was like a fortress amidst changing tides. Poetical language and honeyed words made no impression upon her. For her a spade was a spade, right was right and wrong, wrong; she believed in her Bible and Prayer Book, had a good number of healthy texts and proverbs at her disposal but was not maudlin about her religious beliefs. Everything about Green was square, strong, healthy, uncompromising; she was certainly not refined, her "h's" were in the wrong places, but she was "true blue," neither flattery, smiles nor threats could buy old Green. Auntie, wanting to have the upper hand in my nursery, found herself up against someone who knew how to resist. This was a most unwelcome obstacle, so deep and numerous plots were laid to try and oust old Green.

Truth obliges me to say that, whatever intrigues there were, did not start in our house. Our only desire was to



live in peace with everyone, and to have a reasonable amount of freedom within our own four walls. Nando was too loyal to existing authority to contemplate rebellion, and I too great a believer in all men to dream that there could be some who willingly stirred up strife. This was however the case, alas ! and caused endless trouble.

I was ready to be a loving niece, I longed to find a motherly friend in Aunt, I wanted to keep alive my admiration for her, but those who incited her to try to come between me and my children were ill-advised. I was not prepared for the endless machinations of those whose very *raison d'être* was intrigue. With open eyes and colours flying I walked into their every trap. It was an ugly game on their side and quite unjustified, as I was full of good feeling towards them, never doubting that here, as everywhere else, I would be loved and accepted for what I was : a whole-hearted, joy-loving young woman, believing that the world was meant for happiness and human beings born to be friends. I had no idea that, representing the future, I was a danger, someone who must not become conscious of her power.

Though by nature unsuspecting and not particularly observant, I did finally perceive that often when unannounced I broke in upon Aunt's circle, my cheeks, rosy from healthy exercise, the breath of the woods in every fold of my dress, a hush much resembling embarrassment would fall upon the company assembled around Aunt's chair. Probably I had been the object of a conversation they would hardly have liked me to overhear, and Aunt's beautifully simulated delight at seeing me had not the ring of entire sincerity. These people were not my friends, even my inexperience understood this : I was an outsider, *die Fremde*, I was under-educated, unintellectual, with distressingly English tastes and habits ; there were dogs at my heels, flowers in my hands, sometimes even there was actually mud on my shoes, but—and this only very gradually dawned upon me—there were children in my house.

In later years I understood Aunt better and her hungry longing for what had been denied her, that aching longing which turned to envy when I, little realizing what I repre-





UNCLE SERGE AND AUNT ELLA IN OLD RUSSIAN DRESS.

sented, invaded her darkened sanctuary with my insolent youth.

Yes, I was an invincible reality. I did not know this; I never realized that when I came into their closed circle, I was the future, striding victoriously into the room.

Aunty would throw out her arms: "Ach lieb Kindchen, Du bist der wahre Frühling," and she would picturesquely press me to her heart. "Sit down here at my feet and listen, darling," and I would sit down, and all the old ladies I had disturbed would sit down again and also the ecstatic young girls who kept their eyes glued upon the poet-queen's face. There were generally also a few men in the room, mostly long-haired and pale-faced, writers, musicians, a stray architect, a sleepy general and a few nondescript youths who would discreetly lean about in shadowy corners, whether amused or bored it is difficult to say. The air was always vibrant with tense excitement over some topic, some new hobby, some bit of music, of embroidery, some painting or the marvellous discovery of some new book. Nothing was ever taken calmly, everything had to be rapturous, tragic, excessive or extravagantly comic. Aunty always imagined she was discovering rare souls. She could not admit those around her to be ordinary, so she saw wonderful talents in quite commonplace people, beauty where there was none and wits in many who were merely pretentious and often absurd. She saw everything and everyone through the prism of her desires. Her rooms were always crowded with the most miscellaneous company; she needed a continual audience, and this audience was trained to hang on her every word, to follow her every mood, they had to laugh or weep, praise or deplore according to the keynote given. Her own work, painting or writing, was, of course, the aentral interest and voices were raised in never-ceasing appreciation. She was relentlessly diligent and her imagination was never at rest; unfortunately her taste was not always equal to her perseverance, and at times it was arduous to find words of praise in keeping with the truth. But nevertheless many precious little works did her busy fingers create.

Carmen Sylva was a marvellous conversationalist, but

what was difficult to stand was that she never chose her public. It must be admitted that she continually "cast her pearls before swine." Already in my youth this peculiarity of hers made me acutely uncomfortable. Once launched upon a subject she would be carried away by her own eloquence and quite ignoring the quality of her audience, would speak of her soul, of her most sacred and intimate beliefs, of her childhood, of the real and imaginary slights received at home, of the non-comprehension of her mother, of her husband. She would tell about her maladies, about the maladies and peculiarities of her relations, of her own and their matrimonial disappointments with the most intimate physical details, all this with the sublime unconsciousness peculiar to the poetic temperament which has the need of weeping and rejoicing in public, of expressing its every sentiment without the slightest restraint and with a complete lack of humour.

Always sensitively conscious of atmosphere, it was a keen suffering to me when I felt that others, seemingly interested, were in reality laughing up their sleeves. I often longed to implore Aunty to stop discoursing on certain subjects. She was always so terribly in earnest whilst, like all Latins, the Roumanians are sceptical and have a sharp, not always kindly, sense of humour. Sentimental rhapsodies irresistibly awake their irony; they do not want at all hours of the day to be reminded that they have a soul or even "tired loins" or breaking hearts. Certain reprehensible old ladies or hysterical spinsters would hang upon their Queen's every word and with clasped hands and ecstatic exclamations, stimulate her outpourings, their handkerchieves ever ready to wipe away tears of emotion. I hated them for encouraging Aunty to give herself thus away so unreservedly in public.

I must admit that my special enemy, the one I have called the Chief Inquisitor, who was also somewhat Aunty's jailer, did her best to bring back soaring conversations to normal spheres. She was an ambitious, unkind, old woman, worldly and hard-hearted, but in the midst of a company of exaggerated sycophants she kept the sense of values.

Far be it from me to want to diminish the value of





CAROL AND ELISABETHA AS QUITE SMALL CHILDREN.

Carmen Sylva's salon but I should not be painting a true picture if I did not lay stress upon this peculiarity, so characteristic, of seeing everybody and everything in unreal proportions. It explains many of the tragedies of her life. She never could resign herself to a normal atmosphere.

Carmen Sylva often gathered really remarkable people about her, musicians, poets, writers, philosophers, scientists, doctors. I have met in her room many celebrated men and artists such as Sauer, Sarasate, Vandyke, Schlesack, Ysaye, Raoul Pugno, Thibaut, Hubermann, Sarah Bernhardt, Réjane, Catulle Mendès, and others whose names do not come to me at the moment. She knew how to appreciate them, how to draw out their sympathy, their enthusiasm. She would fire their imagination with flattering words, she would listen to them breathlessly and shower intelligent appreciation down on their heads. They generally went away completely under her spell. Somewhat of a muse herself, she really was a genuine protector of every art. Carmen Sylva had a vast correspondence with interesting people and wrote beautiful letters. All this was admirable and enriched our lives, but our trials began when real talents were lacking and she would try to fill the vacancy with anything upon which she could lay hands.

Aunty could not exist without the excitement of continually discovering rare beings and of promoting their talents or peculiarities. The poor quality of these substitutes was more than made up for by her own enthusiasm and that rare, though somewhat disconcerting capacity of seeing everything according to her own ecstatic measure.

This would have been most satisfactory had it sufficed her discreetly to glorify these protégés, for her own private gratification. But Aunty wanted to share all things with all men, even her faked geniuses, and we were continually called upon to adore, admire and go into raptures over these very ordinary and sometimes even absurd personages. This was sometimes amusing, but more often a great ordeal, as, alas! we did not possess her rose-coloured spectacles.

I remember how she was once patronizing an elderly Frenchman in whom, although he was professionally a



painter, she imagined to have discovered a rare musical genius, declaring that, not only did he know every opera by heart, but that he could, unlike any other ordinary mortal, sing in turn the parts of tenor, baritone and bass. Although really musical and herself an artist, Auntie would actually invite us all to sit around and listen to the self-complacent fellow who warbled impossibly in every key. Carried away by genuine enthusiasm, really believing him to be as wonderful as she declared he was, with clasped hands she would go into ecstasies, whilst we on the contrary had from time to time to escape from the room for fear of giving way to too unseemly fits of laughter. Into the bargain, the man would assume the attitudes of a second-rate actor. Whilst impersonating a tenor he would, hand on heart, send melting looks to the younger ladies, or changing suddenly into a baritone he would pose as the virile and energetic conqueror. When it was the turn of the bass he would take up the attitudes of a high-priest singing in a temple, or a "heavy father" in distress. As a comic performance this would have been unique, but having to be taken seriously it was a strain our laughter muscles could hardly endure.

I have also known Auntie suddenly glorify as beauties extraordinarily plain people; she would rave about their hair, their eyes, the shape of their noses; about the perfection of their feet and hands. And whosoever was momentary favourite had also to be admired by others who were eternally called upon to enter in with her praise.

Quite in the earliest days at Bucarest I once came into Auntie's room and found her pacing up and down, arm in arm with an elderly Englishwoman of haggard countenance and hungry eyes whose meagre but fair hair was streaming down her back. "Oh, come in, darling! you must see Edith's lovely hair!" Edith's face expressed a sort of astonished gratitude, she had never been aware before that she had lovely hair. This same Edith fell in love with one of the royal A.D.C.'s.

We have had all manner of A.D.C.'s in my time, tall and short, lean and stout, cheerful and morose, ceremonious and jocular, good-looking and plain, intelligent and common-

place. Edith's A.D.C. was plain but he considered himself a lady-killer. He wore a short brown beard, and his hair being scarce, he brushed it with tender care from the nape of his neck, up over the back of his head to end in a swirl on his forehead. He spoke with studied gentility and liked to hear himself talk, often closing his eyes affectedly whilst his somewhat pale fingers toyed with the ends of his aiguillettes. He considered himself a wit, whilst in reality he was absurdly insipid, but though clever and highly cultured, poor Edith allowed her middle-aged heart to be moved by this man and his ways.

Aunty, greedy for romance in any form, believed that here she had stumbled upon the real thing. She began spinning her golden web around the elderly lovers who were, to say the least, somewhat absurd but also a little pathetic. I remember certain court lunches when "the man and the maid" beneath the sun of queenly smiles gave way somewhat too conspicuously to their tender sentiments, the haggard lady leaning over the table whilst the conceited colonel let himself be adored, a smirking expression of satisfied vanity glued to his face; he had never before dreamed of being quite such a fine fellow.

Though Uncle was always present at these meals, he never observed anything as unimportant as flirtations; absorbed by much more weighty problems, he was conveniently blind. Not so my husband however, and I had a certain difficulty in restraining his indignation and making him see the funny side of the little comedy. But Aunty was in her element, she had before her not a faded old maid with washed-out blue eyes and an absurd manikin in a uniform, but a couple of lovers; the eternal song was being sung, she truly heard nightingales and saw blossoms blooming round their heads.

Of course poor Edith's romance came to an untimely end. The busy king may have been blind, but not so others seated at his table and having, because of Edith's infatuation, become a favourite, the Colonel was beginning to sun himself too comfortably in the royal atmosphere. The Colonel had a family, and the family had ambitions. It would have been better had they not—but!— Well,

the Chief Inquisitor was on guard, she cared little about nightingales and spring blossoms and at court favourites are short-lived.

Edith was persuaded that she needed a holiday and the Chief Inquisitor made it evident to His Majesty that she was more useful in England than in Roumania and His Majesty, having had his eyes opened, agreed with the one whose business it was to purge the Queen's life of those who wanted to soar too high. Edith never returned from England; the Colonel was given a regiment in a provincial town.

Poor Auntie was eternally getting into trouble because of her uncontrolled flights of imagination. It was pathetic to watch the rise and fall of her successive favourites, and the dust raised when they crashed. I also often got into trouble, but not in the same way.

Auntie was always elaborating some tremendous scheme, some fantastic plan for the welfare of her people, for the good of humanity. She never saw anything small, everything had to have dangerously huge proportions.

A more altruistic woman never lived; she was ready to part with her last penny, to take the dress off her own back to relieve suffering or satisfy a supplicant, but because of this unstinted charity towards all men she fell an easy prey to impostors. Most women have to pay for their sentimental indiscretions; such an event, I believe, never upset Auntie's life, though in her youth she must have been exceedingly attractive with her fine figure, dark curly hair, sparkling blue eyes and magnificent teeth, but she was too high-flown, too much the eternally singing muse to fall into the usual sort of sentimental dangers; she scattered herself too much. Her pitfalls were of another kind.

She believed all things possible, and having no sense of proportion, nor of the absurd, she would listen with flaming enthusiasm to the greatest humbug a child would have seen through. Sensing her credulity, many cast their nets over her, and being without reticence in what she told and confided to the most casual acquaintance, she was eternally putting herself into the hands of people, both male



CARMEN SYLVA ON OVID'S ISLAND.  
(Taken with my camera.)



and female, who, profiting by her confidences, gave endless trouble.

Some sort of row or blow-up was sure to follow every one of Carmen Sylva's elaborate schemes ; she made promises she could not keep, spent money she did not possess, appointed people to non-existent posts ; she wrote letters, gave recommendations, received odd people and believed perfectly sincerely that she was saving souls. I have seen her most ignobly betrayed and taken in, I have seen those she showered her kindness upon turn against and calumniate her, and constantly did the King have to retrieve her out of the hands of impostors, save her from the hopeless muddles and difficulties she had got into.

This quite naturally strained their relations with each other ; Auntie stuck desperately to those she had believed in, would seldom admit that she had been cheated, convinced on the contrary that she and they were being persecuted and misunderstood.

I pitied both King and Queen in turns. They were such strong and splendid personalities, but his sober and implacable logic and her high-flown fantasy did not spell peace. Uncle suffered from a complete lack of imagination, was stern and serious to an almost exaggerated degree ; everything to him was an important problem. This often made life heavy, the court atmosphere unbreathable for those who wanted freedom, but his iron will and unshakable belief in himself and his own point of view made him absolute master ; his decrees were seldom disobeyed, but occasionally revolt boiled in the heart of his family. I was not in sympathy with all Auntie's exaggerations ; I was not at home in her circle of intimates, felt ill at ease when she kept soaring upon the high wings of her fantasy whilst a company of adorers flattered her to her own detriment, but I *do* think that she had a hard time of it. Uncle was a rigorous master.

And yet no man can judge for another, can entirely enter into another's feelings, understand the needs of his soul. Auntie's vocation was to be a martyr ; she, so to say, revelled in this attitude. Drama and confusion were perhaps as necessary to her as sunshine and peace are to

others. She had no desire to live in an everyday world, and sometimes I had the feeling that her griefs were to her a luxury; she actually exulted in them. They were part of her being as well as the eternal excitement of the unknown, the thirst for tragedies that might at any moment stir her to a magnificent outpour of poetry and grand language. She did not *want* to see people and things in their true proportions, it would have been too uninteresting, too commonplace. Her imagination had to be kept in a state of ebullition. I remember how one day she exclaimed whilst telling me about a young girl, the favourite of the season: "She is a beauty, my dear, a real beauty, but the astonishing thing is that she does not know it and that no one sees it!" That was Auntie all over. The girl was plain, had a pimply, sallow complexion and a little button of a nose set in a nondescript, uninteresting face. Her eyes, it is true, were dark and vivacious, but the girl herself was modest, unassuming, and never dreamed of being anything else but comfortably commonplace.

I have seen several others, however, who had their heads turned by these unexpected outbreaks of admiration, and one even, who, after having been thus glorified quite beyond reality, could never more find her footing amongst ordinary circumstances and mortals. But Auntie having been the only one to class her amongst the demigods, she is to-day a wandering and pathetic figure who has lost her *milieu*.

Yes, Auntie led a strange, unreal life, in a hothouse atmosphere where queer growths sprang up around her, to fade completely away when she was no more there to project her imagination upon them.

Besides, her enthusiasms were not always long-lived, they flamed too high to be durable; she was eternally discovering new prodigies, so that I have seen many glorified during a season wither away into oblivion as though they had never been.

In my youthful conceit I was inclined to class all those who swarmed round Carmen Sylva as false prophets; I felt hostile towards their often evident insincerity. Occasionally I would try to take my place amongst them, but was ever again discouraged by the want of healthy fresh air in

her surroundings, so more than once I missed perceiving those of real value who were sunning themselves in her presence.

Thus it was with Georges Enescu, our greatest Roumanian violinist and composer. Having early discovered his remarkable talent, Auntie helped and encouraged him in every way from the time he was a boy. His inborn and surprising modesty saved him from having his head turned. He was of too real value. But wearied by having to admire so many nonentities in close succession, I never realized till much later that here was real gold. I saw him continually, listened half bored to the praises I heard, I also at times let myself be charmed and delighted by his violin, but it was outside the walls of the palace that I came to know him really, and once he confessed to me that he had been often both hurt and astonished by my evident indifference and wondered why I hardly ever spoke to him. "You treated me as though I did not really exist."

I explained that I had imagined that he undividedly belonged to "the other side," which meant that unnatural atmosphere particular to Auntie's surroundings in which I was never at home, having always felt an outsider.

Auntie was most lovable when one could have her to oneself. She could be a wonderful companion and had a unique faculty for enjoyment. She was never *blasée*. Besides, she was so many-sided, so interesting, a real well of knowledge, one could learn so much from her, barring of course things practical! She also had a rare gift for making you feel welcome, but her charming naturalness vanished when there was a public to appraise her; she then played to the gallery, which made me excruciatingly shy and almost boorishly resentful.

In one's youth one makes no concessions, one is too hasty with one's criticism and condemnations. It is simply because one does not understand. All Anglo-Saxons have an instinctive horror of "showing off," and when Auntie "showed off" I became more tongue-tied and awkward than I really was, mostly out of opposition.

But in spite of the critical attitude of my youth, to-day I realize that I learnt much from the poet-queen. She



was a splendid model of amiability, perfect manners and unselfishness. Auntie was always thinking of others, working for others, and if at times her kindness became stereotyped and her exclamations of pleasure or gratitude rather conventional, I learnt in turn, when official duties came to be my share, that the length of many years' throne service and the eternal repetition of certain duties, finally become almost mechanical, and one cannot every day of one's life find the same enthusiasm for the eternal old round.

Royalties, whenever they appear in public, have always to look attentive, interested, amiable. No matter what may be going on in their hearts, no matter if their heads ache, if they have had bad news, if they are tired or sad; the moment they are in public they belong to others, their real personalities are effaced, they are a prey to a thousand eyes. Their every expression is noted, criticized, discussed, also their looks for which they are held responsible. People forget that they are human. If shy, they are looked upon as awkward or proud, if they do their part too well they are dubbed actors. They can never satisfy everybody, so they simply smile. Their smile is in fact their shield, the armour they put on as protection against all these looks that consume them, that try to pry into their innermost being, to discover their most hidden secrets. There may have been times when to be a king was an enviable position, it can hardly be called so to-day.

Once I was asked to write an article upon royalty. I did so with the sincerity of a real, live, feeling human being; by the way I was criticized, I realized that I had not been understood. We are not there to be understood, but as a butt for each man to sharpen his wit upon. Much is asked of us, we are eternally in the public eye, but for all the sentries on guard around our palaces we stand absolutely unprotected; each man has a right to criticize, nay even insult us, but we are not allowed to take up our own defence, to protest or to explain an attitude; there are no occasions on which we can publicly confess our faith; we are to sit dumb as though we had no feelings, no opinion and to suffer each man to make a grimace out of our face, lies out

of our acts or words ; we are to behave as though we had neither eyes nor ears, not even common sense.

We are accused of not being in touch with the man in the street, and yet when we try to get in touch with him that very man or his neighbour considers that we are descending unduly from the height upon which *he* set us, thereby losing our dignity. We are criticized if we stand aloof and equally so when we do not. When we are over-amiable we are supposed to be "making ourselves cheap," if we are over-dignified it is said that we give ourselves airs. We are supposed to know everything, and yet each man who approaches us more intimately is looked upon as a favourite ; jealousy immediately dogs his every step—why that man rather than another ? Kings must have no friends ; kings must be lonely and distant or they are not real kings.

It is said that kings never hear the truth, that they are surrounded by nothing but flatterers ; this may have been so in the olden days, but my personal experience was that so much "truth" was brought to them, so many cruel criticisms about themselves, that it was a wonder they did not die of grief. A thankless task, but a proud and great one if they know how to bear the weight, to stand the solitude, and to forgive unto seventy times seven.

In contrast to the "big palace" with the wise King and the intellectual Queen, our household was simple and rather uninteresting. My husband was not a man of showy qualities, he was exceedingly modest and seldom spoke his mind ; he was the most loyal of Crown Princes, allowing himself no judgment of his own, grouping round him no party, no grumblers. He often suffered from the many restrictions laid upon us, but he never revolted, and if he criticized or complained it was only to me. He was a good and earnest soldier with the real German tradition of discipline ; he was fond of his military duties and was happy amongst his soldiers and officers who loved and respected him.

I was the more disturbing element. My spirits were uncrushable, my health exceptional ; I liked fine clothes, gay surroundings, fun, outdoor exercise. Always up and

doing, I was continually inventing, desiring, hoping something. Considered very pretty, my face in itself attracted interest. There lay dormant in me those many possibilities and also dangers peculiar to women who are admired for their good looks. This gives glitter and excitement to existence, you are never overlooked; somehow the world reckons with you and a certain zest goes with you always, a latent sense of power. Fairly or unfairly you are to be counted with. Instinctively you feel this power even in youth when it is quite unreasoned, but nevertheless it is always there, part of you, your surest and most invincible ally. We were kept well under, we were to be allowed no ideas of our own importance, but in spite of suppression youth was ours, there were children in our nursery and we were the future that could not be ignored.

Riding played an enormous part in my life; to some this may appear trivial, but I had an instinctive sense of self-preservation. To me riding meant health, vigour, enjoyment, above all, it meant freedom outside the palace walls and contact with nature. On a horse I was liberated from chains and restrictions. I felt one with the ground I trod, one with the trees, the sky, the fields and those that till them. Riding taught me to love the Roumanian soil, allowed me to get into touch with the throb of the country's heart. Untrammelled I could reach out for its beauties, its different aspects, I could learn to understand it, first with my eyes, later with my soul. Absolutely indifferent to weather, I have thus taken possession of my adopted country by sun and moonshine, through wind and rain and stifling dust, over snow and slush, on the wide plains and rugged mountains. My Roumania came to me on horseback; alone I discovered it, little by little we got into touch and finally we understood each other in spite of iron etiquette and court restriction, in spite of the ill-will of those who cared not for my young vitality, for my brave hopes and my dangerous conceptions of liberty.

In the saddle I was invincible: riding was my greatest accomplishment; it was a sport at which few could beat me and I confess that in this I was really ambitious. It was my pride to be able to ride horses that others could

not master. I was more indefatigable and could stand more than the most trained cavalry officer. I soon got the reputation of being a hard rider, and it was quite unfairly said that I rode my horses to death; I loved them too much and my art in the saddle was too real to overtax the resistance of my mounts.

I admit that there was a touch of wildness about my riding; I had an adventurous spirit, as well as a romantic imagination; when on a horse I felt the world mine and the intense joy it gave me may have made me look more dashing than I really was.

One never can see oneself from the outside, but looking back to-day I understand that the way I liked to head a troop of officers, rushing them over any sort of ground, always leading, filling my followers with the ardour I myself felt, firing them with that keen joy of life which was my characteristic, must have sometimes attracted criticism. There was no harm in it, I was not "fast" in the real sense of the word, but my youth needed an outlet; also I hated to be beaten and took a sort of childish pride in being the first in every race. Nando condoned this, for although he often had to reprimand me for my indifference to appearances, for him too I was as a glass of champagne at a dull dinner. A less keen rider than myself, he nevertheless was generally of the party and enjoyed the fun, but not always without protest. He had a heavy hand and little patience with a restive horse, so I quite naturally became possessor of the mounts that were difficult to handle. This was my pride, and if ever there were times when I showed off, it was certainly when in the saddle.

In our youth we were not able to buy wonderful horses; we were kept very short, but those at the "Old Palace" occasionally condescended to give us their surplus and it was thus that I became possessor of a chestnut mare called Sulina of which I was very fond and rode for years. Nando had been given a tall and fiery brown-black Trachener, Zimmer by name, but this animal soon fell to my share, for being difficult to handle he exasperated his master. Zimmer had to be ridden with an easy rein; when you pulled at his mouth he became a fiend, but he was just the sort

of horse I needed when heading a troop of riders. Zimmer could never bear another horse in front of him, but felt the same glorious exultation as I did at being first.

Of course my wild cavalcades were not looked on with approval by the "Old Palace," but strangely enough in this I had my way. Riding was as necessary to me as eating and sleeping, and with a tenacity that, in looking back, I marvel at, I overcame all prejudice and objections and rode as much as I liked, and what was most astonishing, I actually rode alone without being followed even by a groom.

I suppose that already in those days of dependence I had a will of my own, and when relentlessly and pertinaciously pitted against authority I occasionally wore it down through sheer tenacity.

I do not think I was ever downright unpleasant. I was certainly wilful and what I desired I sued for impulsively, stormily, as though my very life depended upon it, but when I had got it I liked others to be glad with me, to rejoice over my victory and take part in my pleasure. Thus by degrees the objection against my riding subsided, to be gradually replaced by a certain goodwill towards this mania of mine which was finally understood to be harmless. And it came to pass that even those who had been the chief objectors began to like to see me on a horse, as I was so joyfully invincible when I looked down upon them from my heightened seat. The intense rapture I felt seemed to communicate itself to others, and they hazily realized that after all I was doing no one any harm, whilst the healthy exercise I took certainly seemed to agree with their future queen.

At first my people had harboured the queer notion that riding would prevent my having children, and above all else *this* was to be my chief function. Roumania desired a copious royal family, but they soon had to convince themselves that my passion for the horse did not prevent me from performing my family duties; I gave the country six children. They were not all born in close succession, but for all that, there were six!

Even *der Onkel* got accustomed to seeing me on a horse and would greet me with a kindly smile when I came riding





THE TIME OF BIG HATS.

towards him through the woods. In his steely make-up there was some corner which was in sympathy with this Anglo-Saxon girl whose will he could not break. He did not approve of me, I was a constant anxiety, but he liked me in spite of himself.

Uncle's tenderest passion was Sinaia and its magnificent forests. He was a good, though slow walker, and had himself staked out nearly every path in the wood. Nando and I sometimes helped him in this, it was quite exciting work. But I was too fond of being on horseback to care for walking, it was too slow a form of locomotion; but I shared Uncle's love of the forest, and he liked my appreciation of his walks, which I knew by heart. When we suddenly met each other, he on foot, a walking-stick under his arm, depressingly followed by two secret police, I proudly seated on my horse, we had a feeling of good-fellowship and his smile was one of real affection in which there lurked even a touch of amused pride.

The legend, dear to the hearts of our people, would have it that the King could never refuse anything to his dashing and unregenerate niece. This also was fiction, but at times, carried away by my indomitable high spirits, he relented from his over-severity and seemed in spite of himself to enjoy my buoyant youth.

At Sinaia I took to riding astride, it was safer in the mountains. One of my Russian admirers had sent me an authentic Cossack uniform, a dark blue caftan braided with silver over a scarlet underdress. I wore it with the silver *cartouchières* barring my chest, and round my then exceedingly slim waist the belt and silver inlaid dagger which belonged to it. This was in the days before women showed themselves in knickerbockers, and this Circassian dress, though somewhat startlingly unexpected, was perfectly suitable for a lady, and it never struck me that thus attired I might be considered an over-picturesque apparition.

In this array I would ramble over Uncle's roads, mounted on a wild Cossack horse Cousin Boris had sent me after his first visit to our mountain home, a horse that could climb like a goat; his appearance was wild, with long-flowing mane and tail, his manners were uncivilized but his sinews



were of iron and many a year did he do me excellent service. But I did not only ride on beaten tracks, but also on scarcely trodden paths, where the forest was most lonely. Neither the hardest climb nor the most precipitous descent did Cerkess refuse, sometimes almost sliding down on his haunches, sometimes straining every sinew so as to keep his footing during our steep ascents; thus did he dauntlessly carry me wherever I wished. Cerkess and I climbed up and down trails known only to wood-cutters; I have known the forest in all its grandest, wildest solitude, and alone I have stood on the mountain-tops, gazing down upon the world which lay below me like a painted picture. In every season have I known Sinaia's forest; in earliest spring carpeted with violets and anemones, the foliage of the beech trees so young that it was a yellow light overhead; I have known it in its dark summer shade, and especially was I familiar with its autumn glory, a fantastic world of burnished gold. I have also known it smothered in a pall of dazzling snow, but this was on foot, not on horseback.

The freedom my rides procured me kept alive my *joie de vivre* in spite of those who wanted to suppress my youth and curtail our happiness, in spite of severe German etiquette and the Chief Inquisitor's dark scheming; and when, gaily clad in my Cossack costume, mounted on my long-tailed horse, several dogs at my heels, I suddenly came upon Uncle, in spite of his official disapproval I perceived an involuntary look of appreciation in his eye. No doubt I was a worry to him, I perplexed his days, upset his ideas about what should or should not be, but I was young and meant no harm and I loved his forest.

"Schöner Tag, herzliches Wetter"—Uncle always talked of the weather, which was his continual preoccupation. "Ja Onkel, und ein so schöner Wald, kein Wald is so grossartig als der Sinaia Wald," and Uncle was glad to hear praise of his beloved forest. I knew how to appreciate it, we each possessed it in our own way, I on horseback, he on foot.

"Wo bist du gewesen?"

"O überall es gibt so viele Wege."

“Ja, ja, aber sei vorsichtig, dein Pferd sieht ziemlich wild aus.”

“Aber er klettert wie eine Gemse—Adieu Onkel!” and with a wave of my hand I would gallop off. I can almost swear that although he shook his head over my unconventional ways and reprehensible eccentricities, *der Onkel* had at those moments a certain fondness for me in his heart.

It gave Nando pleasure to see me take an interest in his military occupations; he encouraged me to pay occasional visits to his barracks and he invited me to accompany him on many of his marches.

When we were first married he was serving in the Sinaia Chasseur Battalion, and it was in that dark brown uniform that he was most familiar to me, the uniform he had worn for our wedding. Later, when he was promoted to colonel, he was given command of a cavalry regiment, the 4th Roşiori, of which Uncle in an hour of weakness had made me honorary chief. This was a supreme concession on the part of the austere king, but as before mentioned there were moments when his fondness for me took the upper hand.

This was a great event in my young life, and it came to pass in the autumn of 1897, when my brother Alfred and cousin Boris were on a visit to us. This nomination was received with tremendous enthusiasm by officers and soldiers, and no end of joyful festivities took place, and the first time I reviewed my regiment was indeed a proud moment for me, and from that day onwards a strong and lasting link was forged between me and the dear Patru Roşiori.

In those days our hussars wore red tunics with black braiding and golden buttons, white trousers for full uniform and black for everyday wear. I, of course, had a uniform made and at all the parades I would proudly ride at the head of my regiment and it would have been difficult to say who was more elated, my soldiers or I. In my case, of course, the white or black trousers were modestly replaced by a skirt, but one of Uncle's fondest jokes was to ask me: “Bist du heute in weisse oder schwarze Hosen?” Uncle had few jokes and he always repeated them.

Close behind our palace of Cotroceni was a large exercising ground ; it was either muddy, dusty or stone-hard, but I seldom missed a day when my regiment was out, no weather ever kept me at home. "The field of Cotroceni," though anything but attractive, was my sporting ground for over twenty years. My soldiers were always on the look-out for me and each time I galloped past them I was greeted with lusty cheers. There was a giddy sort of exultation in this, difficult to describe if never experienced. Some spark of keen understanding and sympathy passed from me to them, a sort of electricity of which both sides were acutely conscious ; it was life, it was hope, it was a world of strong possibilities.

I felt absolutely at home amongst our soldiers ; I had the happy sensation that they accepted me unconditionally, without restraint. Nationality did not separate us, no reserves were made, I was not on approbation ; I simply belonged to them, and when they saluted me they did so with perfect conviction.

I should perhaps not be the one to say this, but I owe it to them and to that unshakable loyalty they have always shown me. They were a unity I could count upon, loyal, uncriticizing, devoted. They admired me for my iron nerve on horseback, for my tirelessness and physical courage, but they also felt instinctively that staunch, fearless fidelity peculiar to my nature. We were happy in each other's company, amongst them I found a spontaneous allegiance not met with elsewhere.

I was *their* princess, my ways were not found fault with nor my privileges discussed, nor did it matter to them if the rights I appropriated to myself were absolutely orthodox or *protocolaires*. To me, the army seemed like a big and devoted family of which I was a specially welcome and honoured member. Unaccustomed to the ways of newly established countries, I secretly suffered from that want of spontaneous acceptance of my royal person which I encountered in Roumania. That spirit of censorious and almost hostile criticism was new to me, it was chilling ; I did not understand it. My education and convictions had been so royal, in such an indisputably royal *milieu*, that I had

no idea a new country needed to be slowly won by sheer hard work and by many renunciations. I thought I would be an accepted fact as I had been in England and Germany, where our rights had never been questioned; nor was I accustomed to the Latin spirit of irony and scepticism; my Anglo-Saxon naïveté was no arm against it, it cut into all my beliefs, shook my faith in the stability of things in general and often made me feel a poor shivering little outsider, incapable of coping with people of such vastly different ideas and education.

But in the army this spirit was not apparent, here each man saluted me as he saluted his flag; a warm feeling came over me, I was at home—and what more can one say than this?

Each morning when going out to their exercise ground my regiment had to pass Cotroceni, for after nearly three years we left the town palace for our own house, Cotroceni, situated on the outskirts of the town. It was surrounded by a large garden which was almost a park, and all the regiments had to pass alongside it to reach the field beyond. I used to hear the tramp of feet, the rumble of artillery, the clatter of horses' hoofs. So that I should know when it was my own Roșiors marching past, our band used to play a certain valse; it was its signal, a call to me, and I would dash up a small mound overlooking the road and thus daily have my own private little parade, especially in springtime when we had early breakfast in the garden, so I was generally at hand when I heard the signal.

Whilst Nando commanded my Roșiors he had arranged that, three times a week, I should take part in the riding lessons he gave to his officers in their roomy riding-school. Although I hardly needed riding lessons the discipline was good for me and I thoroughly enjoyed them. The music played and I was a diligent pupil, although I was a better rider in the open than in the school, besides, I often confused right and left, which was humiliating. What I liked best was the hurdle-jumping at the end, which was performed to the sound of the same valse the band played whilst passing our garden.

It is with a feeling of emotion not unmixed with pathos that I look back on all this ; it sounds so small and unimportant in the relating but I can still feel that particular thrill of happy elation when, after having ridden down the road between Cotroceni and the barracks, the *manège* doors were opened wide to let me enter, the officers all lined up in a row saluting. My horse was generally in a state of frisky excitement and there was a time when I was picturesquely followed by an enormous sand-coloured Newfoundland who waited for me outside and, the lesson over, would solemnly escort me home again.

I suppose I was young and foolish and later I learnt that many had considered me frivolous, but it was purely a case of high spirits, which are irresistibly contagious, and a glorious capacity for taking pleasure in small things. I can only pity those who saw it all with the jaundiced eye of disapprobation ; the loss is theirs, not mine.

All this proves, though, that I was not much of an intellectual in those days ; I am not sure that I am one to-day, but I have, with time, become something of a thinker. It was, however, natural that Aunty rather looked down upon this impetuous niece whose pleasures were so exceedingly trivial. She was not shocked, but she could not understand my silly tastes.

In my defence let it be said that I had never been " out " before I became a matron, so there was an overdose of vitality which had to be worked off by degrees, and this would not be a complete record of my life if I did not pause awhile to describe these rather giddy but pleasurable years upon which I look back without a twinge of regret. I was still quite unripe, but I was also enviably innocent and trustful. I saw no evil in anything, nor did I imagine that others could do so.

It was in the winter and spring of 1897 that this *joie de vivre* period reached its height during a long visit Ducky, who was then Grand Duchess of Hesse, paid to us with her husband. Ernie could be the gayest of companions, he was in fact full of almost feverish life. There was something effervescent about him, rather restless even ; he was highly



RIDING WITH "DUCKY" IN 1897.



strung and had the artistic temperament developed to the highest degree. He enjoyed everything and could also be a clever inventor of varied amusements. This was Ducky's first visit to Roumania as a married woman, and our joy at being together and sharing all things again, knew no bounds.

We were probably looked upon as two frivolous young ladies, and were no doubt severely criticized by those wiser and steadier than we were. But for both of us it was a period of magnificent enjoyment which the disapproval of others could not mar. There is a superb daring about youth, which is admirable in its way ; barriers and obstacles only heighten the desire to overcome, break through and win.

To-day I have learnt that all periods of life are necessary for the forming of character and personality ; joy is as indispensable as pain, but joy at the beginning ought to be stronger than pain, and those whose lives lie behind them must remember this and be glad when the young are happy, even if their joy is taken a little wildly. Character, like all things, must evolve, it is useless to imagine that the experience of others can help, retard or hasten this evolution. At best it can steady it, be a brake at the hour of peril. Youth has to skirt dangers, burn its fingers, has to be tempted, perhaps even to fall so as finally to learn how to stand firm. The giddy period when pleasure is paramount has to be lived through, it is like spring storms before the calm of summer can set in. So in spite of frowns and criticisms, in spite of those who blamed or forbade, our youth had to break through.

Bucarest was gay : in those days people seemed to be well off, and there were certain houses where we were allowed to go to dance. These were carefully chosen by Uncle ; we would never dare accept an invitation without his special consent. Strangely enough, he did not permit of our going to foreign legations ; it was only much later that we obtained this concession. A pleasant set of acquaintances grouped themselves around us that winter and I was at last even permitted a few friends. Having visitors who had to be entertained, we were able to reach out towards a certain emancipation up to the present denied us. Besides, it is a well-known thing that shared joys are much greater. To have Ducky as a companion was unutterable happiness.



We both loved dancing and we had a gay winter. Ernie enjoyed himself as much as we did and, his vitality being infectious, he did Nando a lot of good. In his youth my husband had not the faculty of real enjoyment; he was too anxious and this gave him a somewhat protesting attitude that we did our best to overrule. The truth was he was too much in awe of Uncle; the fear of his "vetoes" was always with him, so he could never "let himself go" to complete enjoyment. Ernie, however, often helped him to overcome his inborn diffidence; the young brother-in-law, so to say, conquered Nando's doubts with his much greater self-assurance.

The chief event for us during that season was a costume ball we gave at Cotroceni. Ducky and I both appeared as "Princesse Lointaine," a personage out of one of Rostand's plays made famous by Sarah Bernhardt in her time. Quaintly enough, we had both chosen the same costume, although we had kept it secret from each other, with the only difference that hers was white with large pearly lilies worn over the ears, and mine was made out of a black and gold Indian tissue and that instead of lilies I wore red roses.

We won complete success, but these long clinging gowns being difficult to dance in, before the cotillion we changed our costumes, and reappeared clad as sun and moon, Ducky being the moon and I the sun.

The old King and Queen generally graced our balls with their presence and Aunt, who could enjoy things with real zest, actually came dressed as Dante, wearing a long-flowing red-cloth garment. She was an astonishingly successful embodiment of the eternal poet, and taking her part seriously, she was not only dressed as Dante, but she moved through the room as though she had in truth been the great man come to life again. She did this admirably, but it somewhat disconcerted the young dancers who were at a loss how to play up to such an impressive personage. Uncle, of course, could not come in costume, but he made the tremendous concession of appearing in a "calaraş" uniform he had not worn since his young days. Uncle did not belong to those kings who were for ever changing their uniforms. Year in,

year out, he could be seen in the sober black, red and gold of the infantry general which on festive occasions was smartened by the red ribbon of the Cross of Roumania, a pair of heavy unbecoming epaulettes and a white aigrette stuck in the front of his braided képi. Neither had Uncle's képi undergone the slightest transformation with the years. More "swell" officers had gradually widened its crown, but King Carol's head-gear always retained its original, rather tea-cup shape which differentiated him from other generals, as did also his strong square-toed boots. Uncle was not *un élégant*, all about him was sedate and somewhat solemn, there was no effort towards effect. It was his extraordinary quiet dignity which made of him an imposing figure, and those piercing, all-seeing eyes kept in leash even the most unruly.

The grave King, having donned cavalry uniform for his niece's costume ball, strengthened the legend that I could do anything I liked with him. He may have had moments when his frigid austerity melted somewhat before my impetuous ardour, but these moments, alas! were few and far between. But I *did* feel, however, that there were hours when that more human side of his rather enjoyed yielding to my high spirits. I was, no doubt, a somewhat refractory and unsubmissive member of his well-disciplined community, but though unruly he divined that I was without guile and there was a healthy frankness about me occasionally disconcerting and certainly rarely found in his surroundings but which was instinctively sympathetic to his upright nature.

My language was "yea, yea" and "nay, nay," a great contrast to Carmen Sylva's flowery speech; Uncle was political but not false or wily; he was hard and straight; our two wills clashed, but we had an instinctive respect for each other based upon inner rectitude. With a certain amount of justice he considered me superficial, and I, in my youthful impatience, thought he took himself and everything else too seriously; to put it frankly, he often bored me, but we had a liking for each other all the same.

On this memorable evening Uncle greeted me with the words: "Heute habe *ich* die weissen Hosen an," and the black and golden Princesse Lointaine hugged him with real grateful affection.

The ball was a success ; there were many good costumes of which I remember in particular Alexandra Cantacuzène (later Catargi) as Walküre, and Rada Vacarescu as Murat in a white and gold Empire uniform. He was very good-looking and was much admired.

In those days balls at Court were official functions ; the mothers came with their daughters and everybody had taken the trouble to dress up, even the old ladies, and the Ministers, who also had to be invited, actually came in coloured *fragues*. I can still see portly old General Manu, Peter Carp, Take Ionescu, Marghiloman ; even these important gentlemen had accepted the spirit of the evening and everybody seemed well amused. Only old Lascar Catargi, for if I rightly remember, we still had a Conservative Government in, came in sober black. These more weighty personages of course did not remain very long, and gradually the crowd thinned and we danced till our feet ached.

Ducky was so happy with us that she prolonged her stay right into the spring. She was as passionate a rider as I, and we were in the saddle nearly every day. Everything had to be shared as much as possible with our friends, and especially with the precious 4th Roşiori, of which all the officers, of course, became our very devoted slaves. We sisters "let ourselves go" in the exhilarating delight of being together and each day we invented something new. Our clothes also played a great part, we liked being as smart as possible ; often we dressed alike and were not above certain eccentricities of attire. Our pleasures were innocent enough, but being both of us rather "showy" we of course often laid ourselves open to severe criticism.

Having good figures with slim waists, we had, for instance, special riding habits made *tout d'une pièce*, very tight-fitting as though moulded to our bodies, worn with a leather belt round the middle. In warm weather we wore these habits in white drill and even our boots were white. It certainly looked smart.

In those pre-motor days, it was the great *chic* to drive on the "Chaussée," the Bucarest "high-life" promenade. There were many smart carriages and fine horses, and towards

evening all the *élégantes* would drive up and down the long avenue in their very latest Paris toilettes, which were at that period showy with exceedingly ornate hats. The custom was to trot down the length of the Chaussée at a quick pace, which was really fast, as most of the horses were Russian trotters, coal-black with long-flowing tails. Only a few sophisticated exceptions, such as the Vernescus, had adopted more Western turn-outs with high-stepping roadsters who went at a normal pace. The way back was done at walking pace, so as to let the horses rest and to allow a mutual review of the ladies' smart dresses.

Ducky and I often took part in this late afternoon parade and would dress up in consequence, careful that our gowns, hats, cloaks or parasols should be in pleasant harmony. I remember certain black felt, boat-shaped hats we affected, with one long white and one long black plume. We called these the "Empress Eugénie hats"; they were decidedly becoming and accentuated the movement of bowing, for being, of course, much saluted, we had to keep bowing all the time. Every horse in Bucarest was known to us, and certain faces to which we could put no name were simply called Chaussée acquaintances. Some were, I believe, not particularly respectable, but we were not supposed to know this; their dresses were all the smarter, and as everybody bowed to us, these painted ladies did the same. To-day it is so much the fashion to paint and clothes have become so much simpler and so much more uniform, that the type, in those days very conspicuous, has almost entirely disappeared, but in 1897-98 these "professionals" were certainly quite a feature of our Eastern Bois de Boulogne.

Nando and Ernie also often drove out on the Chaussée. When our carriages met, our husbands used politely to salute us and we answered with becoming grace.

Of course it was our pleasure to turn out as *chic* as possible: our victoria had the fashionable line, our horses were shiny, our harnesses smart, but the Prince's carriage had an advantage over ours; beside the coachman sat a green and silver-clad *chasseur* with long plumes flying from his bicorn hat, whilst we could only boast of a footman.

Frivolously inclined as we were during that giddy period,

purposely exaggerating our affectations, we began tormenting Nando to allow us to drive out with his *chasseur*. A great stickler for etiquette and prerogatives and strongly imbued with a solid Teuton belief of man's superiority over woman, Nando indignantly repudiated these demands, declaring it was only the male members of the royal family who had the right to a *chasseur*.

"But it looks so much smarter," we insisted: "why should your carriage be smarter than ours? It is quite dowdy to have a mere footman."

"You have your fine clothes," retorted my irate husband, "and leave unto Cæsar . . . etc." But this was just exactly what we did not intend to do, and thereby hangs a tale so absurd that it would be a pity not to relate it.

Uncle also had a *chasseur*; he was smaller and less good-looking than Nando's beplumed swell, but he *was* a *chasseur* for all that. He may even, being a king's *chasseur*, have worn more silver braid than the Prince's but I do not clearly remember if this was so or not, but even Uncle, though rarely, occasionally took a turn on the Chaussée.

Amongst our special friends and *dévoués* was a young officer up to any fun, fearless, amusing and enterprising. Although it was a grievous violation of military rules with the danger of impending punishment, we naughty sisters persuaded the rash young fellow to take off his uniform and don the livery of Uncle's *chasseur*, which somehow we had managed to get hold of. Ernie was in the plot and it fell to his share to get Nando to start out on their drive before we left the house, so that they should already be coming back up the Chaussée when we drove down. Our whole effect depended upon our meeting each other face to face. Our friend and Uncle's *chasseur* happened to be the same size, and though their faces were not alike, with the strap under his chin, the crowning glory of feathers waving about his head, his countenance was not of great importance; besides, Ducky and I had dressed as showily as possible so as to attract all attention away from the box to ourselves.

It was not without an uncomfortable sensation of guilt, however, that we started off, smiles glued to our faces, our Empress Eugénie hats doing their duty to the utmost, and

thus, right through the Calea Victoriei, past "Capşa," past the palace to the Chaussée we sailed, the plume of our *chasseur* offensively conspicuous.

With our hearts in our mouths we finally perceived the rival *chasseur* coming towards us, his gay feathers fluttering above the crowd like wind-swept wings. Then came the excruciatingly exciting moment when our carriages met. Nando raised his hand to salute the King; he had a very special salute reserved only for the sovereign of the land, there was a particular *chic* about it, the old Potsdam *chic*, with a certain stiff turn of the neck, because who else but the King could be sitting behind that privileged livery?

As long as I live I shall never forget the expression of disgust, nor the frustrated gesture with which Nando lowered his hand when it suddenly dawned upon him that it was not Uncle he was saluting, and to what a shocking degree those two irrepressible sisters had transgressed against the rules of the family, annexing a privilege to which they had no right. Ernie had, I believe, a pretty bad time calming his irate brother-in-law, but he shyly persuaded him that nothing could better punish the delinquents than to ignore completely their crime. Nando heroically adhered to this attitude till we went to bed; it can easily be imagined what a scolding I was then given, but I have forgotten the scolding and the trick was worth the risk.

I can hardly believe that Uncle was not informed of our escapade, but he ignored it, which was the only thing to do; if he had begun to punish the transgressors our poor officer friend would have found himself in a sad plight, and I am afraid the two giddy sisters would have laughed on the wrong side of their faces.

Ducky and I also took great pleasure in hunting out the picturesque sides of Bucarest, the old parts of the town far away from fashionable traffic. We used to haunt the streets where there were queer little shops in which we found quaint objects in leather, pottery, wood and metal of local workmanship. We often came back with our carriages piled high with these strange acquisitions at which the servants turned up their noses. Now that I had Ducky for a companion I

could indulge in that suppressed desire to know Roumania more intimately from that side which made it so different from the Western countries to which we were accustomed. She took the same interest in it as I did, so that everything became worth while.

In quite hidden corners we discovered quaint old houses with wood-shingled roofs padded with great lumps of moss ; we found half-forsaken old gardens and strangely solitary squares atrociously paved with round cobble-stones. We came upon wee churches of rare architecture and lonely-looking graveyards behind crumbling walls, and above all we loved the old stone crosses so unexpectedly met with at odd corners of the road.

A great attraction were the gipsy camps mostly to be found on the outskirts of the town. We would leave our carriage and penetrate undismayed amongst the tents, climbing over heaps of indescribable refuse, gazing about us full of interest but not without a shudder.

In a second we were surrounded and besieged by a tattered horde, loud in their insistence for alms. Naked little children, palms extended, would whine for pennies, repeating endlessly the same cry : "*Cinci parale coconița*," whilst impudently handsome girls, scantily draped in filthy rags, once bright, now discoloured, would laugh, arms akimbo, showing an enviable display of white teeth, strong as those of young wolves.

Bewildered, dazed, half attracted, half repelled, we had not eyes enough to grasp all the picturesqueness. But it was the old crones who fascinated us most. Each was the incarnation of some witch read about in childhood, familiar figures from tales we had loved and shuddered over. Crouching above mysterious black pots, standing motionless at the dark mouths of their tents, leaning on their staves, gazing with bleared eyes at visions of their own or coming slowly towards us through the dust, wrinkled, toothless, crooked, they were almost too good to be true. From their broad girdles wound several times round their lean loins hung the soothsayer's shell, and in their trembling hands they often held a greasy pack of cards. Fantastic figures, we could not tear our gaze from them ; yes, witches every one of them, and

our not understanding what they were mumbling added to their mystery.

Noise and confusion, skinny dogs slinking about, dusty donkeys and lame, raw-boned horses, starved-looking animals, patient and long-suffering, nightmare creatures one almost hoped were not real, and moving as masters through all this confusion, fierce, dark-eyed men, hitting right and left with their sticks to keep a little order amongst their tribe.

Thinking of gipsies I always have the vision of a hundred extended hands, brown, slim-wristed, grasping, monkey-like, touching me from all sides, a regular forest of hands and ever that same whining cry of the children: "Cinci parale coconița, cinci parale, cinci parale. . . ."

Sights such as these we had certainly never seen either in England or Germany.

Motors did not exist in those days and I often drove Ducky out in a high-perched carriage drawn by two frisky Hungarian Juckers, over atrocious roads, to explore the villages round about Bucarest. These were mostly poor and straggling, but the more untidy and desolate they were the more they attracted us. We loved the wee houses with their over-large roofs heaped with maize-leaves, they looked so absurdly dishevelled; they too belonged to the fairy-tales of our childhood, one expected to see Hansel and Gretel stealing up towards the witch's hut. In spring we occasionally discovered clusters of double daffodils and periwinkle-blue hyacinths within the rickety enclosures, or here and there a peach-bush in glorious pink bloom. In the dun-coloured, neglected surroundings these flowers stood out like tiny miracles.

Spring has an incomparable fascination, and although when the snow melts, the Roumanian roads turn to rivers of liquid mud, I can never resist driving or riding out into the country so as to watch each small flower in turn bravely push its way through its winter covering. This fascination holds good, is the same to-day as it was in that blessed spring of 1897 when Ducky and I explored it together.

Riding picnics were one of our special entertainments when the dancing season was over. Ernie had left, but



Ducky stayed on, loath to tear herself away from me and the surroundings become dear to her.

These picnics were sometimes arranged by us, sometimes by my regiment. The meet was either at the end of the Chaussée or in the Cotroceni court-yard according to the direction in which we were going. I can still hear the impatient clatter of the horses' hoofs outside my window and feel the exquisite excitement of jumping into my saddle, gathering up my reins, ready for glorious adventure.

Either tea or lunch was sent on before us to some wood where a few non-riders would meet us by carriage. Few ladies rode with us, but Hélène Odobescu was a solid horse-woman and could keep up with our pace, also Mlle. Olga Catargi, a tall, slim girl with a long nose, and Nelly Wyndham, the younger daughter of the English Minister.

The Wyndhams were charming people. He was typically British with his fresh, ruddy complexion and his neat side-whiskers, closely cropped. He had an infectious laugh and an inquisitive nose which seemed to start quite unexpectedly from the middle of his jovial face. Lady Wyndham was a well-dressed woman, tall and dignified, which did not exclude a keen sense of humour, and she would occasionally lecture my sister and me when she considered we were being unnecessarily imprudent.

The officer highest in command under Nando's orders, in the 4th Roşiori, was a certain Colonel Bogdan. A more optimistic, amusing, cheerful cavalier cannot be imagined. He was in continual high spirits, nothing could squash him; and he somewhat softened Nando's severe German discipline. Ducky and I were very fond of him, he was always the life and soul of our rides and an excellent organizer. He took life with a smile, and was a real Latin in his conceptions of morality. Ladies played a great part in his life and occasionally this led him into trouble. I remember how once in my innocence I tried to admonish him, and it can well be imagined with how little result.

One of my best friends was Major Bassarabescu, an earnest man, very unlike his chief and whose career I followed step by step. To-day we are still close friends and love to remember those happy, irresponsible days when life was open

before us, a glorious battle to win. We did not always win. Life was cruel to Bassarabescu, but I never lost sight of him.

I also see other faces : Major Mager, who rode a high-stepping chestnut I much admired and who later became Uncle's A.D.C. ; Captain Cociu, who was the *ménagère* of the regiment ; Jean Florescu, an excellent rider ; Goe Odobescu, very young Prodan whom we used to call *la jeune fille* because he was so pink-and-white and beautifully mannered, and also "mad" Ressel, whom I still meet sometimes. We had *des petits noms* for each and were a set of good friends, loyal, happy and young.

One officer of my regiment, who had a great admiration for my sister, would occasionally decorate our saddles with garlands of flowers before we started ; this both touched and embarrassed us, as we did not consider it looked sporting to ride with a flower-entwined saddle, but we had gracefully to accept this well-meant homage in which I had my share by ricochet.

Sometimes our rides took the form of paper-chases, and the final gallop when we tried to catch the "fox" was grand fun.

Often our gipsy-band, the "Lăutars," were sent out to the picnic-place which added to the festive atmosphere. The chief "Lăutar" of those days was called Ciolac. He was a real figure in our lives and in other lives also. He did anything he wanted with his violin. Ciolac existed till well after the War, and the last time I heard him play was at my daughter's wedding.

Nando always went with us, but I am afraid he did not enjoy the rides quite as much as we did ; he objected to the pace we went ; in his youth, in fact, he wasted much breath in protestations. But he liked being with his officers and I, who was *Stallmeister*, saw to it that he should have a quiet, powerful horse that would not try his temper. This paragon was found in a horse called Forward, which he rode for many years with pleasure, whilst I headed the cavalcades on impetuous Zimber.

Hélène Odobescu had a delightful old father, Colonel Odobescu, who wore long side-whiskers. He was all square and portly, had a dominating voice, an explosive laugh and

a great love of horses. He rode a strange speckly chestnut with queer patches of white about his legs. All these details may seem trivial, but they make my pictures more vivid. Personally I like to know how a person looked, what a lady wore, what flowers were on the table or any quaint detail which singles out one man from another. The fun of life is observation. The comic, the sad, the beautiful, the strange, the pathetic, the absurd, it all serves to amuse the eye, to interest the mind, to move the heart. Man or beast, flower or landscape, event or sensation, laughter and tears, all is of interest for anyone who lives with his every faculty, and the man who can only be stirred by great events, despising the interests every day offers, lives on the outside edge of life, not in its very heart. This at least is how *I* feel.

Looking back, everything rises again before me, nothing has been forgotten; neither the white patches on old Odobescu's horse, nor the sunset whilst we rode home, nor the different faces of my companions of yore, wrinkled to-day and marked by the passing years, some of them missing. I may have been gay and seemingly frivolous, but my high spirits never hindered me from going beneath the surface of things. I felt the undercurrents of the life that teemed around me: they all entered my subconsciousness, became a store of memories ready at any moment to spring up fresh and living.

It was only, much later, when I began using my pen that I realized what an unconscious observer I had been in my youth and how great was the store of knowledge hoarded up through the years; even those which outwardly appeared all lightness and effervescence, were years of learning when heart and soul were slowly forming. Nothing in life is without meaning. Years ripen man as the sun ripens the corn.

In my youth it never entered my head to try and write. For many years I was quite unable to take myself seriously or to imagine that I should ever be able to do anything really well except riding. I continued to imagine I was still the very ignorant girl who had started out from home at the age of seventeen with little knowledge and no accomplishments. Accustomed to be ruled by Mamma and her conceptions of





IN ONE OF MY SINAIA ROOMS.

life, her code still counted for me undisputedly. Although I struggled for freedom and for a certain measure of independence I felt myself of little account.

Once I said to Auntie : " I cannot get accustomed to taking myself seriously ! " The old Queen's tragic eyes looked at me with an astonishment not unmixed with pity. " You do not take yourself seriously ? *You*, the mother of several children ? I took myself seriously at the age of three ! "

Many years later I remember talking with my friend Elise Bratianu, a lady for whom I always had great respect and of whom I stood slightly in awe. She was asking me why I did not do a certain thing and I lightly answered, " Because I am not intelligent. " My friend turned and looked at me with her piercing eyes : " You have no right to say such a thing ! You are full of intelligence but you are too lazy to use it ; just try and see the things you could do, if you gave up being lazy ! "

This tart admonishment made me think : Intelligent ? Was I really intelligent ? I had never seen myself in that light. It was a fresh point of view, it opened out quite new horizons, other possibilities. Intelligent ? Supposing it were true ? Elise said it with such authority. She also said I was lazy, too lazy to use my intelligence ; lazy ? Perhaps I was. . . .

This was characteristic of my attitude towards myself, I had not the least ambition to be clever.

The only " indoor " accomplishment I had was painting. Of course I was fond of reading, in several languages, but I found the greatest pleasure with my brush. Both Ducky and I, like several of the women of the English Royal Family, such as the Empress Frederick and Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, who were real artists, had talent for painting and drawing.

I had taken a few very good lessons with the same lady who had taught my mother-in-law, Ruth Mercier, a remarkable flower painter. Her technique for water colour was unique, as she expressed it : " *Je peins à grande eau.* " Although I had her only once with me for six weeks, she gave me a solid foundation and I never forgot her principles ; they were a firm basis during the years when I handled a

brush. She was unique of her kind and her flowers were incomparable.

My love of colour and instinctive feeling for line was a great asset ; I never worked enough so as to become a real artist, but what I did produce had a certain originality, and also, I believe, some strength, my drawing was good and I was undeniably *une coloriste*. Feeling that I would never have time to give myself up to more serious study, I developed my talent along certain lines with a tendency towards the decorative, acquiring a style of my own in which form and colour played the chief part. I had well understood Mercier's way of washing on colour in glorious quantities so that even when dry, my flowers kept a velvety depth true to nature and pleasing to the eye. In this I was an adept.

Ducky and I spent many happy hours painting together. In those days I was perhaps the better painter of the two, but in later life she became a real artist, whilst I laid down the brush for the pen.

Aunt Elisabeth was always painting "books," elaborate *enluminures* on parchment, destined for churches. One of these is at Curtea de Argeş, in the church which has become her resting-place. It is a wonderful bit of work, most perfectly mounted and finished off. I also personally possess a beautiful little book she painted for me as a wedding gift, a wee little volume like the precious prayer books of old, offered to me in a priceless little casket copied from an ancient Byzantine reliquary. It is not a prayer book but contains poems specially written for a young bride starting out on her life's journey, poems Auntie wrote for the occasion. I dearly love this perfect little *objet d'art*.

Although we were not great admirers of Auntie's art as a painter, this idea of illuminating books was very attractive to us. We did not try to paint Bibles or to compose our own verses, but we decided each to paint a book for the other decorated with flowers and as text a selection of those poems and quotations most dear to us. At the age of twenty-two and twenty-three these were of course more sentimental than philosophical and well-dosed with *Weltschmerz*, for although we loved life and its gaities we were acutely conscious of its tragic undercurrent.

These books were not only planned and promised but actually took form, and we still treasure them immensely. They are full of colour and originality and although no doubt faulty, still to-day I consider them artistically good.

Later I painted two more books, more important productions with an art which had become more *raffiné*, more studied and perhaps better understood ; I had, so to say, learned to express myself.

My first book was painted on Japanese paper, but these later books were painted on precious parchment, each page framed in silver and the whole book cleverly mounted on hinges so that when opened the pages lay quite flat.

One of these books was painted for my great friend, Pauline Astor, as wedding present. Being a bridal offering I decided that I would paint white flowers only. The result was certainly uncommon and so that it should be absolutely perfect in every detail I had it bound in a thick silver embroidery chosen from an old church design and studded over and over with moonstones. The general effect was deliciously pure and frosted ; the book was in fact a great treasure.

I do not exactly know how Queen Alexandra came to see this book, but it so took hold of her imagination that each time I came to England, she insisted that Pauline should send the book so that she could look at it again and again. Of course I was happy and proud that this very dear aunt of mine should be such an enthusiastic admirer of my work.

The second of these more sophisticated books was painted for my husband. It was my biggest achievement and had been conceived with the idea of leaving something to the house which could not be carried off. I was never able to keep anything I painted, everything was carried off almost before it was dry.

This book was also done on parchment and mounted on the same principles as the other, only the pages had a different shape and the book was much fatter than the first, nor were the flowers restricted to any special colour. It took some time to do, but the result was satisfactory and to-day, now that I paint no more, we are all glad that this book exists as a memento of my abandoned art. Less poetically unique than the book Queen Alexandra loved, it has nevertheless



been to several exhibitions and was given two gold medals, one in Munich before the War and another at Barcelona in 1929.

Once Aunt Elisabeth asked me to collaborate with her in painting a Bible. I accepted and we worked at it diligently for about two years, then Aunty's enthusiasm ran out, so it was, alas! never finished. Though this work threw us a good deal together, it was not easy to collaborate with one whose taste and style differed so entirely from my own.

One could never be safe from surprises and these surprises were often equal to shocks.

Aunt's imagination ran away with her, and the results were occasionally startling.

It was difficult to get her to stick to one style. She would suddenly fall in love with a new idea quite indifferent as to whether it harmonized with what had gone before.

We started fair; I was to paint the flowers first and she to fill in text and design. Both her diligence and patience were admirable and often her inspirations really artistic, but she was too eclectic and had no sense of proportion. We were safe when she stuck to patterns and capital letters, but when she began on figures, the danger line was soon crossed.

The shocks received during this collaboration were many and some of them staggering, the worst being when Aunty suddenly jumped from water-colour to oils. Carmen Sylva handled oils with a heavy hand, besides, oil is always more aggressive than water-colour, and just fancy oil on parchment! Besides, who but Aunty, who saw things not as they were but as she desired to see them, would ever have hit upon the idea of changing from water-colour to oils in one and the same work?

I confess that this want of stability actually cost me tears. All my love of beauty revolted against this transgression of every rule of art.

To-day I often fondly finger the unfinished pages we painted together, there is a whole world of memories in them. But although I smile now when I think of the different phases of emotion I had to undergo, I still marvel at that extraordinary want of taste and sense of proportion which

made Auntie suddenly turn from water-colour to oils. She also had a strange indifference to precision or conventional rules of tidiness. She never calculated what space she had at her disposal and would begin too big, suddenly discovering there was not room enough to continue in the same way, so she was obliged to crush in what still remained, just anyhow, magnificently indifferent to the size of the letters.

At one time everybody, from the Chief Inquisitor to the youngest amongst Auntie's adherents, had to sit as models for her different holy figures. The most unexpected personages were suddenly beatified; amongst others even Ion Kalinderu had to submit to this honour, and he graces one of our parchments as an elderly saint with a halo round his bald head. The portrait is astonishingly like, but I never understood exactly what saint he represented.

In her paintings Auntie used to the maximum the faculty she had of seeing things and people as they were not!

I too appear on one of the pages as the Virgin Mary in her early days, but the child Jesus whom she painted beside me has a head larger than his mother's, for this also was one of Auntie's peculiarities—she was quite indifferent whether her figures had the same proportions, they were all crushed up together on one page and their sizes according to the space she had to dispose of.

But how she loved work! And she took all she did so seriously and everyone had to group around her and admire, admire incessantly and at all hours of the day.

But for all her artistic eccentricities, the Bible she painted for the Cathedral of Curtea de Argeş remains a wonderful and precious piece of work.

From the very first I was interested in Roumanian art and in art in Roumania, and soon after I had come to the country a group of young artists asked me to put myself at their head and form a *societă* which we called "*Tinerimea*" (Youth). We were the new generation going ahead, emancipating ourselves from the older schools, but we were not eccentrics. Luchian, Stefan Popescu, Vermont, Verona, Loghi, Steriadi, Satmari, Strâmbulescu, Atachino, Petraşcu Stork, Späthe and others belonged to this new movement,

and in those days of peaceful prosperity the annual opening of our exposition was a festive and social event when fine speeches were made and when we uttered mutual encouragement. I was even intrepid enough to exhibit some of my water-colours, which were sold for the benefit of the society. This created a strong link between us.

To-day most of the members of our Tinerimea have grown grey, a younger generation has sprung up with a newer and more startling school, the mentality of which slightly distresses me. I cannot, with the best will in the world, see things as they do ; why must everything be as ugly as possible and look as though drawn by a child of three ? Why must cows be blue and portraits so flat that they stick to their background, and all faces be khaki coloured ; why must houses look as if they were tipsy and people have one eye and no nose ? And why are tables drawn as though one looked down upon them from a gallery, and trees resemble worn-out broom-sticks upon giant sausages which have no resemblance to trunks ? I really think that artists to-day try to see how far they can make fun of the public without its revolting.

I know that as Queen I have often declared that the hardest trials in my royal round were : listening to the complaints of the opposition and visiting ultra-modern picture exhibitions, when I had to smile upon an art which filled me with almost physical distress.

## Chapter VI

### ILLNESS: FERDINAND AND CAROL

**I**N the early summer of that same year of 1897 which had begun so gaily, we had to live through terrible anxiety. My husband caught a virulent form of typhoid fever and we very nearly lost him. Several times he was at death's door, as the original malady was aggravated by various serious complications, and it was finally double pneumonia which nearly carried him off. I remember how he was kept alive by injections of salt water in great quantities, which tortured, but finally saved the patient.

I no longer remember distinctly how long the illness lasted, but it seemed endless. Life around us stopped, there was only that one central, all-absorbing preoccupation of the sick-bed.

Three doctors were in constant attendance: Dr. Jean Cantacuzène, Dr. Buicliu and Dr. Kremnitz, a German with a long brown beard, a very clever man and a personal friend of the King and Queen.

I knew little about illness and was no good as a sick nurse, but besides the three doctors, and a Roumanian sister, Nando was marvellously nursed by his old servant Neumann, and his somewhat older wife. These two were the type of servants to-day becoming rare, the type which lived and slaved for, loved and criticized the house they served.

This faithful couple had a single daughter whom they were bringing up in their traditions so that one day she should continue their work in the same spirit, and now that her parents have gone to the "Farther Shore" she is one of the pillars of the house, but *her* daughter, however, in spite of all her mother's training, has other ambitions more in keeping with the non-serving generation of to-day.

During the period of my husband's illness, Aunty was in

a curious state of mind. Sickness had a strange effect upon her; it roused her latent love of drama. Her imagination saw, and to a certain degree even revelled in, the tragedy that it would be if the young Crown Prince were to die.

The old King, a child of four becoming heir to the throne, a young widow, foolish, inexperienced, unworthy of bringing up her own children, and she, Carmen Sylva, as saviour, in her element, with large motherly gestures, sweeping the bereaved into her embrace. She imagined it all, she lived it through in thought, and as her thoughts became words, she, so to say, forced us to live it with her, for she spoke of nothing else. Each time she mounted the high Cotroceni stairs leaning upon the arm of a servant—and she came twice a day—it was as though for a funeral and the swish of her long robes over the carpets was pregnant with disaster. Her daily invasion was indeed “gorgeous tragedy in sceptred pall come sweeping by.”

She would settle down in one of my rooms, assembling around her as many women of the household as she could gather together, and then in a deep, grief-laden voice she would gloat over every tragic story of sickness or death that she or others had ever witnessed.

Curiously enough she was always hungry, so food had to be set before her at odd hours. I can still see her eating large ham sandwiches whilst she kept discoursing upon these lamentable subjects, for there were strange contrasts in Auntie and somehow this sandwich-eating was so little in keeping with the rest.

I confess that I fled from these meetings, to which the doctors were also bidden and whichever of the nurses was not on duty. I simply could not stand so much talk at a moment when my heart was on the rack. I preferred Uncle's stony calm. He was very kind to me during this terrible time and he no more than I could relieve his anxiety by words. But in spite of his kindness Uncle always remained the relentless upholder of outward appearances to which all sentiment had to be sacrificed. My mother, the moment she understood how serious was Nando's illness, proposed to come to me, but Uncle would not permit me to accept her offer for the reason that, none of Nando's family being able

to come, it might make a bad impression in the country if a parent of mine hastened to my side and not one of the Hohenzollerns. This was very characteristic of King Carol. I considered it cruel, especially as Auntie was so terribly sure that I was in a short time to become a widow. Uncle, however, could not prevent Ducky from coming back to be with me during my trouble, although it was but a short while ago that she had left us.

It was quite wonderful the way the people shared our anxiety. Cotroceni court-yard was daily filled by a dense but absolutely quiet crowd come to get news and to express their silent sympathy. In spite of the hundreds that collected beneath our windows not a sound was heard. Hidden behind a window curtain with beating heart, I would often watch this crowd; I felt grateful for their sympathy, but it heightened my anguish as more than anything else it made me realize how close we were to a catastrophe.

Auntie would occasionally go out on the balcony and with tragic face and finger on lip, pantomime the news to those waiting below. I could not bear to watch her, it hurt something within me, because I could not help feeling that unconsciously she was enjoying the drama of the situation. In moments of crisis the difference between our two natures was very marked.

Never shall I forget one terrible night when I was suddenly called to my husband's bedside, the doctors believing it was the end. I had only just gone to snatch a little rest after a day of great anxiety. I can still hear that sinister knock at the door, the voice calling me, feel how like an automaton I threw on my dressing-gown and entered the sick-room. Nando lay on his back, he was so thin that his body seemed one with his sheet. His face was livid and he was breathing with difficulty, eyes were wide open, glassy, but all the same, when I sank on my knees beside his bed instinctively his hand groped for mine. I closed my fingers gently over his, they were wet with perspiration; perspiration was pouring from him, our joined hands lay in a small pool of water. I had often heard speak of "death sweat," now I knew what it was!

As in a haze I saw all three doctors standing at the foot

of the bed. They were quite still, their work was done, their human knowledge exhausted, the young prince was now in the hands of God. A priest was reading Latin prayers, his hushed droning voice fitted into the ghastly dream, also the sudden appearance of Uncle and Aunt who had also been summoned; her face was tragic, his careworn, and his shoulders were bent. Aunt was quite convinced that this was the end, she had always been expecting it, but I with my faith in life clung to hope; to me the scene was all unreality, it was not possible that he should have to go so soon.

It was my faith which was destined to win through. This night brought a turn for the better, it was the crisis. Nando began to breathe more easily, one of the doctors bent over him, felt his pulse, a dawning look of hope came into his eyes . . . a change . . . but a change for the better! I dumbly gazed up into his face, he nodded his head. The tension of Uncle's face relaxed, the tragic line of Aunt's lips softened, the priest was crossing himself, he had closed his breviary. The angel of Death had passed. . . .

Yes, the wings of Death had not touched our house, but the Prince's convalescence was long and wearisome; he had several relapses and once the great Dr. Leiden was called in for a consultation. Roumanians, although they have excellent doctors, very much like calling in foreign medical aid. It was because of general insistence that Leiden was sent for. I cannot say I liked him. These great men, called upon suddenly, always seem to me a bit supercilious; they cannot have the same feeling for the patient as those who through long days of anxiety have trembled for his life.

Finally with innumerable precautions we were able to transport our invalid to Sinaia. It was the "Vânători" soldiers of his own battalion who carried him in a litter from the station up to the Foişor. I well remember that solemn procession, I walking beside the stretcher, Carol on one side, Elisabetha on the other hanging on to my hands, Uncle sedately trudging along with us.

It was an immense relief to get our invalid into the fresh vivifying mountain air, but for over six weeks he still lay in his bed, pale, exhausted, with a brown beard, terribly

changed, with gaunt waxen face, sunken cheeks and skeleton-like hands. To me he seemed almost a stranger.

Ducky had to leave for Grandmamma Queen's Diamond Jubilee, to which Nando and I were also to have gone.

Summer dragged along slowly. Our two beloved little ones were my great consolation, we were much together. I taught them my love for flowers and we used to bring beautiful nosegays back to "Papa" who lay so patiently in his bed. The Sinaia wild flowers are beyond words beautiful and Nando knew every one of them and all their names. I can still see his long white fingers touching them tenderly, like a friend.

A tragic and quite unforeseen incident happened in our house a little while after we had settled at Sinaia. Dr. Kremnitz, who was to remain with us till the Prince could be declared completely recovered, died one morning, quite suddenly, of heart failure. I had just been talking with him, we had even joked and he had told me to run out and take a little exercise, whilst he would go to his room for a rest, for he had a fatherly spirit and all three doctors knew that I too had been through a long strain. They had been immensely kind to me, understanding that this had been my first experience of mortal sickness. At home I had never known sickness ; we had been spared these cruel experiences, this had been my initiation.

We found Dr. Kremnitz dead on his bed, fully dressed ; it was a terrible shock and a real grief for Uncle and Auntie to whom he had been, for years, a close friend. Besides, the sad event had to be hidden from the invalid, who was still much too weak to sustain such emotion, and for a long while we had to keep him from finding out what had happened.

It was difficult to invent reasons for the sudden disappearance of the doctor he was so fond of, difficult also to prevent the news being brought to him unawares.

Dr. Kremnitz being a very big and tall man, and having died in his room on the second floor, it was exceedingly difficult to carry his body down the narrow stairs of our cottage-like house. Besides, in order that Nando should notice nothing of this lugubrious manœuvre, it had to be done during the night, in hushed silence.



Uncle was pleased to find that I did not lose my head and was somewhat surprised to discover how entirely I could be relied on in an emergency. I observed that I had suddenly gone up in his esteem. It was the first time he had put me on trial and I had not failed, nor had I complicated things by any show of feminine nerves or exaggerations.

Although I had no opinion of my intelligence, I had a firm belief in my strength; I had never had to call upon it, but I knew it was all there, that my courage would never fail me when needed. My perfect health gave me a reserve force lying dormant within me but which I instinctively knew could be drawn upon when necessary. Besides, courage was fundamentally part of my creed.

A great ado was made when Frau Kremnitz, who had been abroad, arrived for her husband's funeral. Although Auntie had reason to dislike her, she received her as though one of the family.

These two women were strangely alike. Both were writers, both had their grey hair cut short, and deep-set, haunted eyes. Their speech was intense, vibrant; they were always listening to themselves, always seeing themselves the central figures of tremendous events.

In earlier days they had written a book together, in the form of an exchange of letters between two friends. The collaboration had been interesting, had no doubt for awhile united them in the same enthusiasm, but this was before my time, and I knew that to-day Auntie harboured no love in her heart for Frau Kremnitz. The breach had come, I believe, when Uncle asked Frau Kremnitz to help with his "Mémoires" instead of Auntie, herself a poet and writer.

From Uncle's point of view I understand that he did not feel he could use his too exuberant and romantic Queen for this sober and precise work, but the preference given to another rankled in Carmen Sylva's heart, and the doctor's wife is the only woman of whom I ever knew Auntie to be jealous. This did not however prevent her, when the moment came, from overwhelming her rival with sympathy and, what seemed to me, exaggerated affection.

I was none too agreeably impressed by Frau Kremnitz's

airs and graces, so evidently a replica of the poet-queen, but on a smaller and, it must be confessed, more *mesquin* scale.

Aunty always remained a big figure, generous, warm-hearted and exceedingly aristocratic, whilst her imitator had a certain meanness about her, all her pretentious affectations could not efface her very bourgeois origin.

Later, this ingrained meanness became evident when she took a shabby revenge upon the royal lady who had once been her collaborator, by writing a stupid and, at the same time, somewhat vulgar novel which came out under the title "At the Court of Ragusa," in which, under cover of other names and places, she makes a parody of Aunty's eccentricities and an ill-natured description of her court and ways. Madame Kremnitz, also under another name of course, plays the part of an intelligent woman who consoles the King, and repairs the Queen's blunders. A most despicable book.

With the death of Dr. Kremnitz, Dr. Romalo came into our lives, and was our house doctor to the end of his life.

Uncle and Aunty finally left for their yearly cure in Switzerland, and my mother and younger sister Beatrice, then still quite a *Backfisch*, came to stay with us.

Nando was still an invalid, but was allowed to leave his bed for a few hours during the day and would sit in the sunshine on the balcony, playing innumerable patiences or being carefully entertained, according to his strength, by the few people allowed to see him.

It was a supreme joy to have my mother and sister with me. Baby Bee, as we called her, was a delightful and intelligent companion and immensely enjoyed Sinaia and its beautiful forest. After the long strain my youthful spirits gained the upper hand again and I must admit that our riding assumed rather wild proportions. It was ecstasy to have a young and enterprising sister with me and occasionally all caution was forgotten, and I gave myself up wholeheartedly to the joy of rambling about the forest in all weathers, on every path, little caring how daring our excursions might appear to others.

Mamma, although strict and a tremendous critic, liked to see the young have a good time. She thought that they

never could have enough exercise and nothing could rouse her indignation more than if we demurred about going out in the rain.

"It is ridiculous to remain at home because it rains; people who allow their exercise to depend upon the weather, never take any exercise at all." Mamma's maxims were never wanting in conviction, and for a healthy young being who had been severely kept in leash, this sudden encouragement to give way to her natural impulses was like a door opening upon sunshine. Mamma volunteered to spend the time whilst we were out with our invalid, so we two sisters "let ourselves go" to the enchantment of the summer vacation. *Der Onkel's* weighty shadow was removed by absence, so it was Mamma who took over the reins into her own hands. The "Old Palace" was little in evidence. Castel Peleş seemed to be sleeping. None of its vigilance was abated, however, as I was later to learn to my cost.

All through life I was inconceivably careless about how my actions might appear to others, I never even thought of how things might look from outside. *Vivre et laisser vivre* was my motto; it never struck me that my high spirits could fill others with suspicion, nor that my actions could be misinterpreted, which they nearly always were. But high spirits are a dangerous possession for a royal lady as there come hours when everything is unimportant but the joy of the moment. Caution is thrown to the winds and the spirit of fun and mischief is allowed full sway, mostly with disastrous results, for all the world over there are jaundiced eyes ready to see things as they are not, ready to make mischief, to tear a reputation to pieces.

In fairness to all sides I must admit that prudence was not my speciality. I took others at their face-value, never suspecting them of guile, so it never entered my mind that any but the real interpretation could be given to my actions.

Who were those so eager to make trouble I never really discovered. I suppose the Chief Inquisitor was foremost amongst them, but even to-day I cannot understand what object they had in view. Could none of them remember that they had been young? Was my natural aspiration towards the pleasures of my age so much to be condemned? Perhaps

there were some who understood me as I really was, but they never came to the fore and I must sadly state that my detractors were ever on my heels, never leaving me any peace or respite, so that I always paid a hundredfold for each smallest folly. Was there something particularly conspicuous about me that attracted criticism, jealousy? Was it because I was in a far land, *une Princesse Lointaine*, as I was often called in my youth? Others probably can explain this better than I, I could not see myself as others saw me. I never used subterfuges, everything I did, I did openly, I never tried to delude others. I was always of perfect good faith, genuinely desirous of making others happy, of spreading nothing but goodwill around me. But I was seldom met with the same spirit of generous, broad understanding. It was never my way to spy upon others or to interfere with what was no business of mine, I liked to see people happy and successful; but I have been spied upon all through the days of my life, except the few short years when my husband was king. He had perfect faith in me and we allowed no treachery when together. We stood at the head of things.

Those who spy imagine they are being well-informed, little realizing how many lies are brought to them as truth. I loved humanity, I imagined that everyone was my friend, that joy bred joy, that trust awoke faith.

But, alas, this was not the case and whilst I was roaming through the forest, glad as a bird because of my young sister's company, enjoying to the full that glorious liberty Mamma allowed us, others sat in the dark, weaving webs in which to catch me and blight my happiness. They seemed to see wrong in everything, every one of our actions passing through their murky brains, became distorted and ugly. And yet I do not think that anyone really disliked me, some were genuinely attached to me, some gave me their whole-hearted admiration, some would have willingly followed me to the ends of the earth. And yet all I did was found wrong, was criticized, disapproved of. I seemed to find no mercy, no understanding. Others lived their lives in a turbulent round of pleasure, no one seemed to think the worse of them for it, but although I saw few people, seldom went anywhere and none of the gaieties of the *grand monde* ever touched our

defensive little court, although my life was one long suppression on the hard road of duty, it was all the same, I who was supposed to have fabulous adventures, to have astonished the world with my frivolity. Why, why? Still to-day I ask why?

Finally, Mamma left, Uncle and Auntie came back, the "Old Palace" came into full sway again, and that was the end of liberty and goodwill. Cousin Charly was also there and with her sweet soft voice eagerly helped to destroy.

The story of a life is too long to tell in every detail and even what at the time appeared to be shattering events, later (to use a German expression) *wenn man ausgelitten hat* seems to fit in like a puzzle; all trials and conflicts, every defeat or victory have their place, they are all just steps along the road of life. "One step at a time," as an old pioneer friend of mine used to say, "one step at a time, no man can do more than this."

Youth is wonderful, but it is also a tragedy, with its manifold hopes and delusions, with its insatiable hunger and longings, with its belief and doubting, with its urgent need of action, of self-expression, of ideals, of love.

A really alive human being is always running into difficulties, skirting dangers, coming up against closed doors and taboos. Like a turbulent stream in springtime, youth overflows; there is too much to hear, to feel, to see, to understand, to overcome. There are too many temptations, too many voices, too many discoveries to make; too many roads also, too many people, too many friends; too many who want all you can give.

Those who are tremendously alive rebel against restriction, the moment to them seems everything, they do not weigh consequences, nor count the cost; they go ahead, break through, want to get there, believe they can win.

I have known all these phases and because my life was too hemmed in, my revolts have been deep and painful. Once in these years of conflict I wrote a book of confessions which was destined for my people; I wanted to be understood. The book was to have been called "From My Heart to Theirs," but I never published it. War came

and with it other ways of thinking and feeling, overwhelming events which shattered "all our yesterdays" and swept soul-conflicts away. We were up against stern and uncompromising reality, the days of romance were at an end.

Royal or not royal we are all equals before God, we are human beings, neither crown nor throne shields us from those passions and emotions peculiar to humanity. We stumble and fall, we cry out in pain or hope, we pursue illusions, we rejoice or lament, we climb, we aspire to greater heights, we believe in our strength in our rights, and have to discover our weakness, have to learn to bear our defeats and to begin all over again; and through the good days and the bad runs that eternal little thread of Hope—Hope that one day we shall touch our ideal.

When my husband was considered strong enough to travel we were sent to Nice, to Château Fabron, a house belonging to my mother. It was considered necessary that the Prince should spend a winter in the South, an unheard-of event in our lives tuned to duty and nothing but duty, but before we left it was well impressed upon us that Nice was a place of perdition, that we were in no wise to imagine that we were going there to amuse ourselves, but purely for the sake of health.

We were given what were considered safe guardians, and these had orders to write daily reports about all our doings.

There would be much to say about some of those whom King Carol imposed upon our household at different periods of our life. They were certainly chosen with care and after *reifliches Ueberlegen* but much of the trouble and conflict which darkened our days had to do with these followers whom we treated as friends and who often, alas, all unknown to us, were used as spies and denouncers.

Perhaps the only thing which has shaken my belief in humanity is the incomprehensible cowardliness of most human beings before those who represent power.

Is loyalty really so difficult, is it so hard to keep faith? Is it so essential to be in at the kill? At first I did not understand this simple explanation of many of my misfor-

tunes. Few were absolutely loyal; either out of fear or for the sake of self-interest, over and over again we were betrayed into the hands of power.

Power seems to be an irresistible magnet, nearly everyone wants to be on the side of power. Being all the days of my life something of a rebel, I never worshipped power, it always awoke in me a feeling of antagonism; I hate to see men behave as slaves, or merely as instruments; there is something degrading about it. I was never amongst the lion-hunters. I had genuine admiration for those who had made great names for themselves, but I was never irresistibly attracted to them nor had I any particular desire to sun myself in their glory. I approve of hero worship, we have need of great men for to-day as well as for history. The story of a country is made glorious by the names of its heroes. I am distressed when their faces are marred by those who cannot rest before they reduce all men to the same level. I remember my grief when I was told that William Tell probably never existed, that Joan of Arc was merely hysterical and that Shakespeare did not really write his plays. I do not wish to see either human beings or cathedrals pulled down, but nothing is sadder than to watch betrayals caused by that desire to kow-tow to power, to the man of the moment. It is an ugly sight.

Nice enchanted us. We loved the sunny house, the garden, the flowers in full bloom all through the winter, the orange trees, the sea in the distance; we loved the illusion of freedom far from politics and daily restrictions. Little by little the Prince recovered his strength and the joy of our two children to be able to be out all day long knew no bounds.

As my kind old lady-in-waiting, Madame Grecianu, was in poor health, a young Roumanian girl had also been attached to me, and I had been allowed to take the Coburg family friend, Gretchen Gazert, with me, a concession Mamma had torn from Uncle much against his will. But Gretchen was a great comfort to me, I instinctively felt that here there could be no betrayal; besides, she was a link with the past, a bit of home; she was a safeguard against the

unknown, she was not in the pay of the great. My little Roumanian on the other hand gave me many a shock. She used all her wits to throw sand in our eyes and to exploit to the utmost the giddy joys of Nice. Even the old trick of a sick aunt who had continually to be visited was successfully used, and in perfect good faith I would allow her endless free afternoons. She had huge dark eyes and the attitude of a *sainte n'y touche*. She took me in completely, so completely that I can almost laugh with her at myself, for indeed my credulity must have amused her immensely. But also my good old Madame Grecianu believed that this young person was all that she pretended to be, and also discovered too late what sort she was. Madame Grecianu had had a Swedish father, so she had some of the naïveté of those of the North. She was a profoundly sympathetic lady but easily offended, and not always quite easy for a young *ménage*. She was however absolutely loyal to me and loved me anxiously as she loved her own children.

Alas, I was to lose her much too soon, she died of cancer about two years later. Her memory has remained dear to me.

Little by little our virtuous intentions of living quite by ourselves, far from the frivolities of Nice, were somewhat defeated by the arrival of other members of the family. These, accustomed to come to Nice to have a good time, had no understanding for Uncle's point of view, they laughed us out of our goody-goody attitude and we were invited here and there, made several new acquaintances and were even occasionally seen at Monte Carlo. Oh, not at the roulette tables, have no fear! but in the theatre where the very best troupes from Paris used to come and play. But in the *entr'actes* we would wander through the casino, staring with astonished eyes at the curious amalgam of humanity which pressed around the tables. I even once won 500 francs at *rouge et noir*, an old Italian gentleman having thrown a gold piece for me "for luck." This I was later reproached with a hundredfold and it was cooked up into no end of a row.

Neither Nando nor I had ever had anything to do with *le monde où l'on s'amuse*; this was our first initiation; we



were like country cousins come up to town. This of course much amused our more sophisticated companions who tried to lead us into temptation, with small success, however, as Nando's principles were firmly stiffened by the thoughts of Uncle.

One thing though I could not resist and that was dress. In those days dress was much more ornate and elaborate than to-day, and my ideal was the dresses worn by the great actresses on the Parisian stage such as Jane Hading, Bartel, Granier, Vanda de Bonza, Marcelle Linder, and others, and with these as models before me, I allowed my imagination full sway, quite unconscious that I made myself occasionally over-conspicuous. I was very slim in those days, very fair and also very young, so naturally I did not pass unnoticed.

I would not have been a daughter of Eve if this had not given me a certain satisfaction. I felt all eyes following me, male as well as female, and it was not a disagreeable sensation. I remember with what care I combined a certain gown of flowing black *crêpe de Chine*, the front of which was embroidered stolewise with gold and turquoises; the sleeves were long, close-fitting and ran down in points on the hands. This was worn with a small black tricorn hat. Becoming, no doubt, but somewhat showy, I suppose, and I innocently trailed this too-effective gown through the notorious Monte Carlo halls of perdition, not quite without being noticed as can well be imagined.

But I was not long allowed to enjoy my *un-protocolaire* success. A terrible figure had risen upon our world, no other than that of Alexandrine Tolstoy, Mamma's one-time governess, "old Countess" with all her chins, her caustic speech and her twitching fingers, "old Countess" in the company of two elderly Russian aunts, they too somewhat under the sway of the weighty old pedagogue. I dutifully asked to pay my respects to my aunts and was invited to tea. I went without qualms, being very fond of all my Russian relations. I was however received somewhat as an erring sheep who needed to be brought back to the fold.

Alexandrine Tolstoy sat in judgment over me and my sins were brought before me one by one. Foremost amongst

these was the unfortunate black and golden dress, also a certain pair of red leather shoes strapped Grecian-wise up my ankles, which it pleased me to wear when walking through the town. These red shoes it seems were a sure sign that I was hurrying towards perdition.

In these days even walking dresses were worn long and had to be held up in one hand, so you must not have visions of knee-short skirts and a generous display of calves, nothing of this; nevertheless, the red shoes were shocking.

Much abashed I sat there and tried to feel sorry for having thus transgressed against the rules of propriety. One of "old Countess's" expressions remained in my mind, for it was the first time I had heard it. She was preaching about a princess being overdressed: "Ce n'est pas aux princesses de porter des robes de ce genre, on m'a décrit votre toilette en détail, vous étiez du reste, me dit-on, très à votre avantage." That "très à votre avantage" took some of the sting out of the scolding, that, and some words of kindly comprehension said to me by one of the two aunts, Marussia of Baden (mother of the last Imperial Chancellor), who told me she understood that there was no guile in my imprudences, but that when young and pretty one had to be particularly careful as the world was very *médisant*. I loved her for her kindness, and although we were never destined to meet again, ever afterwards her memory was dear to me. I never forget a kind word; they are secret treasures I draw upon in dark days.

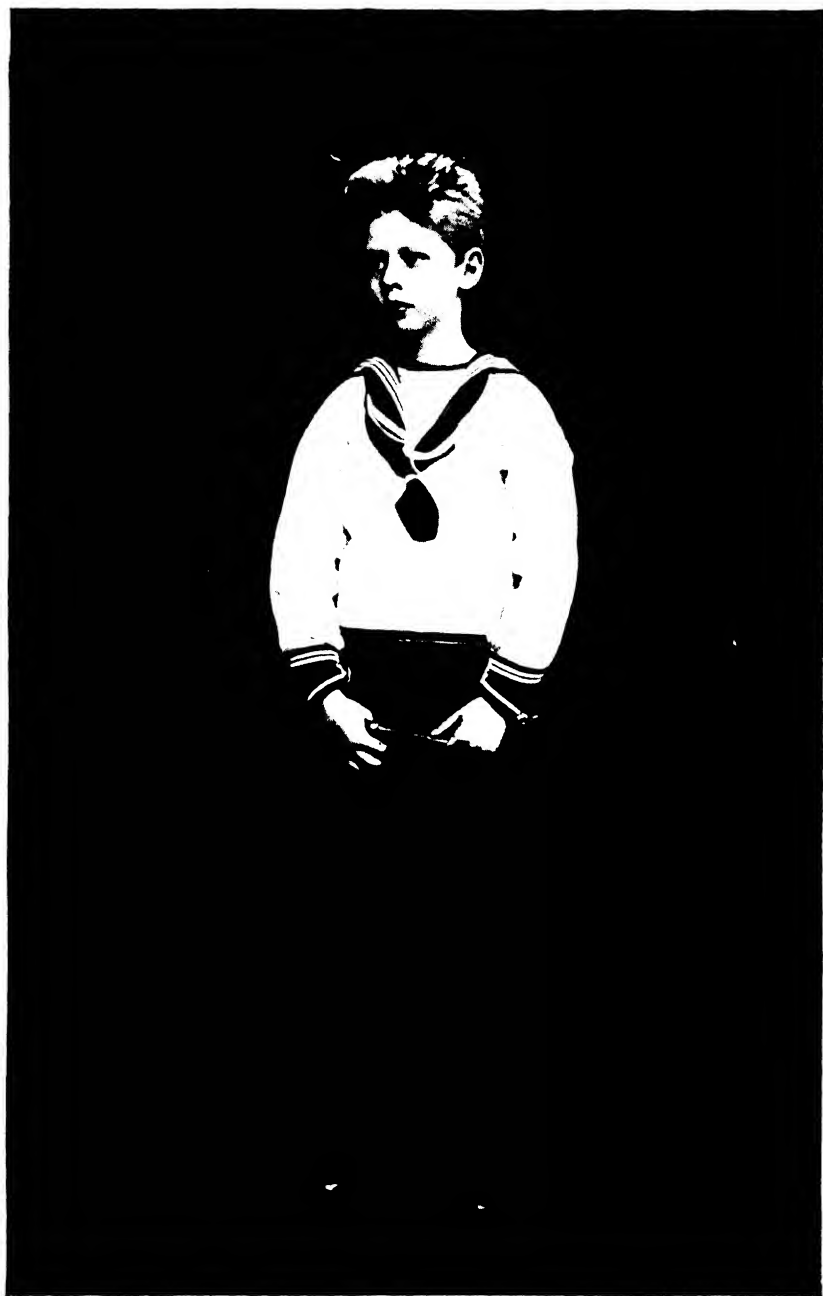
Later came the Carnival when Uncle and Aunt of Connaught lured us out of the Prefect's *tribune* where we were pompously installed amongst the officials, quite in the way King Carol would have approved. But the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, under the cover of their dominoes, threw confetti into our faces and hooted at us for being such prigs. As can be imagined we not unwillingly descended from our seats of honour, and having been given masks and dominoes found ourselves suddenly the centre of a gay group, whirled away into a crowd of laughing, jostling, dancing humanity.

There was also a battle of flowers when I turned my victoria into a bower of orange branches heavy with golden

fruit. All dressed in white, I sat within its shade, accompanied by two of the young Festetics girls, May and Alix, distant cousins of my husband through their grandmother, who had been a princess of Baden. We were very fond of each other and these two pretty girls looked upon me as a dispenser of joy and the days passed in my company were termed "glorious days." Later, May married Prince Carl of Fürstenberg and life still brought us occasionally together, but I quite lost sight of Alix.

There was also Cousin Boris, my faithful admirer, and the yacht of the Mazzarinis and the Xantos and visits to Cannes, all this in a company that Uncle would certainly have considered too gay, but being led on step by step by our relations it was not always possible to stand aside merely as lookers-on. Accustomed to amuse themselves, they could not understand why, young as we were, all this was to be taboo for us. We even actually went to a *bal masqué* where everybody was to be dressed in white. Please do not imagine that we were masked or that we joined the crowd, oh no ! we sat in a box, but nevertheless I was costumed as "Princess Lointaine," a long clinging white dress, long white veil and lilies over my ears and had my own little success. But all our poor little frivolities were carefully noted by the spies specially attached to our heels, and were then passed on to Uncle to brood over to his heart's content.

Uncle, who had been a friend of Napoleon III, was very much on his guard in his attitude towards republican France, and it was rather against his will that he allowed us to go to Nice, for he always looked upon France as a country of dangerous frivolities ; besides, he did not really admit republics, and for him a president was not on the same level as a king, whatever importance his country might have, and he greatly demurred as to whether he could allow my husband to pay a visit to Félix Faure, then the French president, who was visiting Nice. According to Uncle this was a concession he was not in sympathy with ; the idea of a Crown Prince paying the first visit to a president went against the grain. To-day this makes us smile, but I remember the weighty *pour-parlers* there were at the time.



CAROL AT TEN YEARS OF AGE.



Finally it was agreed that the Prince should pay the first visit on condition that M. Faure should, the same day, come to pay his respects to me. M. Faure was a fine-looking old gentleman, tall, with a large white moustache ; he had in fact almost the air of an aristocrat. Our conversation, however, was, I suppose, quite uninteresting, a conventional exchange of amiabilities. Nando was always very shy and I, in those days, had no idea of politics and I can imagine that I did not find much to say to the important old gentleman.

On the way home to Roumania we stopped a few days at Florence to visit my mother-in-law. One mass of flowers, Florence in May was a revelation. I loved its every stone, and as the man who showed us round was deeply imbued with its charm he was able to communicate his emotion to us, so that each church, picture, monument, street corner or view took on a special value. Unforgettable has remained a visit to Fiesoli, and that marvellous view looking down upon the town, with the solemn cypresses rising monumentally above a mass of tender spring green. The tulips, irises, narcissi and roses sold at every street corner were pure ecstasy.

Then came Venice for three days, a dream of beauty, but as it was our last *étape* before returning to servitude, a heavy melancholy pervaded that first initiation to the "Pearl of the Adriatic." Besides, Gretchen and I were to part here, my gentle but staunch ally was to be taken from me. I am sorry to have to confess that, returning to Roumania in those days was like returning to prison—but that was long ago.

On our return, my husband, now quite recovered, took up his military duties again, and I was supposed to settle down and be a good and dutiful little princess, without any imagination, tamely acquiescent to the severe King's every behest. This, alas, was not entirely my ideal, and there followed still many a year of conflict and even periods of danger when everything might have been wrecked. There was an astonishing want of comprehension on all sides, and many intrigues and, alas, more than enough of

those who went out of their way to do harm instead of good, to stir up strife instead of promoting peace.

One unforgivable mistake was made in these days which brought with it endless misery.

True to his habit of complicating even the smallest family matter, turning it into a state affair, Uncle ponderously set about finding a governess for Carol, then about seven years old. Uncle's special method of cowing us was to do everything in the name of his Government; whenever a disagreeable restriction or vexatious concession was to be imposed on our young and much tyrannized household, he would do so in the name of Public Opinion and his consecutive Ministers were used in turns as bugbears, so that during all my youth the expression "Minister" was synonymous with "kill-joy"; they represented for me a special sect whose object was to suppress all good things, to interfere with our every liberty, and make of life in general an intolerable nuisance, instead of a pleasant journey through sunny places. Taken as single human beings they seemed kindly enough, quite human in fact, almost friends, but when Uncle took their names in vain they became almost objects of terror, anyhow of weariness and suppression.

This selecting of a governess for our son was an occasion for Uncle to use all his batteries. He began by declaring that never would Roumania accept a foreign pedagogue who had not already educated a king or a queen, that it was therefore quite impossible for my husband or for me to have any hand in the choice. He alone was capable of finding this unique treasure, that he had in fact already found her and that he expected us to agree with his choice—an Englishwoman who had brought up the Queen of Holland and who was a great friend of the Wied family.

I immediately understood what this would mean; it would mean a spy, if not an enemy in the camp, one receiving orders from the "big palace," one who would be in league with the Grand Inquisitor and all my persecutors; the thought was intolerable, it was a threat against the peace of our poor little household.

However, for the sake of my husband, who was being

much pressed, in spite of the objections I had put up, in spite of having my own candidate in the form of a kindly and pleasant woman I had known in England and whom my father liked and trusted, I agreed to see the person in question on condition that, if I did not like her, I would have the right to say so, and that then the project would be dropped. The possibility existed that I might like their choice, and then all would be well.

The lady in question was brought to Sinaia for inspection, was received at Castel Peleş with open arms and many signs of affection, but the moment I set eyes on her all hope vanished. I understood that my worst fears had been realized. The woman was just everything that could not be borne, thick-set, heavy with staring, goggle-eyes, a large fleshy nose and repulsive mouth; she was common, with a commonness that only one of her own nationality could rightly appreciate. Also her speech was common and throaty, her expressions were second-rate, unrefined. In schoolboy language she was a "perfect terror." The very sight of her was a shock and her speech completed the repellent exterior.

I tried to explain that there was no ill-will in my feeling of repulsion, that I had hoped she would be acceptable, but for the peace of the future I must declare that it would be impossible for me to live with a woman of this kind, especially in the capacity of mentor of our son, that it would be a cruel mistake to impose upon me a person who from the very first was blood-curdlingly unsympathetic.

I tried to make my husband see that if he accepted he would be introducing misfortune into our home, I knew that he was being coerced, but better put up a fight now at once rather than accept a situation which was intolerable—that could only spell disaster in the end. Instinctively the Prince agreed with me; he too disliked the look of the woman, but he was torn between his natural instinct and his desire to avoid strife by complying with his uncle's wishes. Unfortunately, when young one is over-emphatic, one uses exaggerated expressions, one is too stormy in one's likes and dislikes; we of our family were inclined to exag-



geration of language, our adjectives were varied, profuse and incisive, so instead of being convincing, the overdrastic expressions of my protest were looked upon as caprice and although at heart with me, Nando finally allowed himself to be persuaded by those in power; he gave in, and the unwelcome personage became one of our household, and into the bargain one who occupied an important position.

That day I had a good weep on old Green's ample bosom.

In spite of the instinctive horror I had of Miss W., I nevertheless set about trying to make the best of a bad job. But not so Miss W. She knew that she had protection from a higher authority and, from the first, I felt her hostility towards me, which cropped up at every turn. Certainly I was still very young and had much to learn, but my maternal instincts were exceedingly strong; I adored my children and it was a fundamental mistake to force upon us one who took orders from those in higher power. This was indeed putting a finger between the bark and the tree; besides, it was the destruction of our family happiness, as Miss W. from the first set about alienating our child from us, criticizing all we did or left undone and making continual reports to the "palace" against us, though we only discovered this later on. From the very first day she was overbearing, interfering and impertinent, and I could never get at my own child without scenes and explanations. In all things she referred to the "old court" and treated both my husband and me as though we also needed to be educated. I think she must have had an evil mind, because later, when I heard all that she had said against us, I was aghast.

I will not relate all the misery of her two years' reign; it was the blackest period of my youth, engendering endless misery and grief and even to-day, although it is all so long, long ago, I cannot look back upon it with calm.

It ended in Carol having typhoid fever in the autumn of the second year; he nearly died. I had been abroad with my mother as the woman had made my house intoler-

able to me, but I hurried back and Miss W. resented my return as an intrusion.

I remember a dreadful night when, seated on a low chair beside the boy's bed, my enemy came in, and looking at me with her protruding, ogre-like eyes, brutally asked "if I realized the situation?" meaning that the doctors had given the child up. I looked up sadly into her ugly, unloving face and answered what many have answered before: "Whilst there is life there is hope," and I remember wondering how there could be such monsters on earth.

That night was the crisis. Carol did not die, but like his father he had a long and difficult convalescence, made unbearable by the presence of the woman of whom no one could deliver me; besides, it was two months before the birth of my third child.

In those dismal November days old Green was my only consolation, old Green and my little Elisabetha, a lovely solemn-faced child who, even at that early age, had a strong sense of rectitude. I was also great friends with the Roumanian "sister" who nursed Carol and whom, for some reason, we called Lisica although it was not her name. Lisica liked fun and good living, she enjoyed the food in our house and was always smiling; she relieved the melancholy of the sick-room.

But in Castel Peleş sat Cousin Charly firmly enthroned as Uncle's favourite and her gentle voice added many a whisper against "poor Missy," who was eternally in disgrace.

I used to predict that this third child I was carrying would be a child of tears, because in those days there was not a night that I did not weep myself to sleep, but my previsions were wrong. When my little daughter was born in Gotha on January the 9th, 1900, she was from her first day a child of joy and sunshine, for these miracles do come to pass. Gay, smiling and astonishingly loving from her tenderest infancy, she was more than a consolation, she was a revelation, and I loved her with a love difficult to describe; I could not let her out of my sight, she was a message of peace and hope.

We christened her Marie after my mother and her mother before her, but we called her Mignon and this name has stuck to her for ever. To us all she is and always will be Mignon, only Mignon.

Mamma, knowing the acute torture and humiliation it was for me to live under the same roof as my sworn enemy, had obtained permission for me to come to her for my confinement, and this is why Mignon was born in Gotha. This period of peace and love after all the turmoil, strife and sadness at home was like a rebirth, and the blessed and healthy kindness of my mother, her understanding and the courage with which she fought for me, remains unforgettable to me for all the days of my life.

My stay at Gotha was prolonged right into the spring, because an agreement had at last been come to that Miss W. should depart before I returned to Roumania, but as both Uncle and Aunt clung to their favourite, it took a long time before they could resign themselves to letting her go. During all these months I was separated from Carol, but Elisabetha was with me and she looked with grave astonishment at the new little sister who had come into her life.

We loved the great Gotha Schloss, a huge building the shape of a square horse-shoe overlooking the town from a height, with an enormous inner court-yard. My parents inhabited only one floor of this castle, which they had delightfully arranged with fine old furniture and splendid carpets and rugs. There was a central *Saal* or huge living-room, and here we would all assemble to work, mostly at wood-carving and wood-burning then so much the fashion, but we also painted and embroidered; it was a blissful, harmonious and busy family life. My youngest sister, Beatrice, was growing up. She was exceedingly intelligent and the most delightful and amusing companion, we were great friends; also Ducky came from Darmstadt and Sandra from Langenburg. The *Schloss* had room for many, and there was also Gretchen Gazert, everybody's friend and chief amongst the workers, "Gretchen für alles" as we called her, patient, self-sacrificing, good-humoured, a born

helper and peacemaker, a lovable, gentle, fair young girl whose fate intermingled with ours all through life.

Yes, we loved the Gotha Schloss, but the year before a great grief had come to us there ; the death of our only brother Alfred. We had all assembled for our parents' silver wedding, many guests had come, Uncle Alexis, Uncle Serge, beautiful Aunt Ella and others. Several festivities had to be given, but Alfred was ill, Alfred was unable to take part in anything. He lay pale and emaciated in one of the rooms on the lower floor, his young life wasting away. Soon after he was taken to Meran, but we did not go with him. Whether my parents guessed he was so near his end I do not know, we sisters certainly did not, and his death soon afterwards was a staggering blow. We were all so healthy, so strong, illness was an unknown thing in our family, and now Alfred was gone, Alfred our eldest, the only son, making the first gap in our ranks.

He had died all alone at Meran ; only his French tutor and faithful Rose had been with him. It was unbearable to think that he had died all alone.

Never shall I forget the day his body was brought back to Gotha. We were with Mamma in her room, all of us dressed in deepest mourning, waiting for the funeral procession to enter the castle court-yard.

All of a sudden the church bells of Gotha began ringing and we heard the muffled tones of a funeral march, and Mamma, generally so sober of movement, so undemonstrative, sank to her knees, crossing herself many times and then burst into tears. Mamma ! Mamma who always hid away every emotion ; it was an overwhelming sight ; Mamma weeping for her first-born. We all of us went down upon our knees beside her, whilst the bells seemed to be ringing in our heads and our hearts.

It was in April, I think, that I had at last to tear myself away from Gotha and all those of the beloved family circle to join my husband and Uncle and Aunt at Abbazia, whither they had brought Carol in the company of a new governess ; the fatal Miss W. had finally been relinquished, but not without endless and painful debates. Mamma had

won the day, but from then onwards she and Uncle were only on polite, but never more on really friendly terms.

The new governess, a certain Miss ffoliet of Irish origin, was the exact opposite of her forerunner; she was long, thin, rather shy, very ladylike and unpresuming. Exceedingly shortsighted, she had a somewhat vague and watery look and gave a very limp hand in greeting, but I liked her. Even now we had not been allowed to choose for ourselves, but this new addition to our household was acceptable to us all. How the King had overcome the difficulty that Miss ffoliet had never educated either king or queen, I cannot say, for we were allowed to make no inquiries, we merely had to accept the royal decrees.

Nando was anxious about how I would fit in with the new authority, but I was only too desirous of peace; I never cared for trouble and strife, nor was I ever the one to start a quarrel. I never understood why people needed to be nasty or unkind to each other, but some situations are simply intolerable. It is no good expecting the impossible, Miss W. belonged to that which was impossible; we had to be delivered from this soul-destroying bondage.

It would not be strictly adhering to truth if I gave you to understand that with the coming of Miss ffoliet all strife, trouble and persecutions came to an end, this would have been asking too much of a world run by human beings, but a certain peace and goodwill was re-established and both sides learnt gradually the secret of give-and-take.

Mignon was an adorable addition to our family; a sweeter, happier, fairer child cannot be imagined. I always compared her to those large, sweet-scented, pink peonies, mother-of-pearl coloured, cool to the touch, which impart an exquisite freshness to the atmosphere of a room. Mignon in her way was all this; her hair was flaxen and curly, her complexion that of a pale pink shell, she had the real cupid's bow mouth and long-shaped, rather sleepy eyes, under well-marked eyebrows and long lashes, both of a much darker shade than her hair. Nothing ever disturbed Mignon's placid good-humour, to me she was pure joy. Elisabetha was much more classically beautiful, but was





MIGNON AMONGST THE PEONIES TO WHICH I ALWAYS COMPARED HER  
*(Snapshot taken by myself.)*

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always a solemn, rather austere silent child, unable to express her feelings ; besides, Mignon had come as a ray of light into great darkness, at an hour when I had lost faith in life. Mignon was one of those luminous bridges back to hope which are given to us occasionally, and Mignon unstintedly responded to my love.



## Chapter VII

### KING CAROL'S ADVISERS

THESE are in no way political reminiscences, but as King Carol was one of the politicians of his day and as from the age of seventeen upwards the atmosphere I lived in was saturated with politics, I feel that the picture of my life would not be accurate if I did not give a few sketches of those with whom Uncle worked, describing some of the "Ministers" he used as dampers to our youth.

In Roumania politics are bitter. They are pursued with Latin ardour, party feeling is intensely violent and to Anglo-Saxon conceptions the language used one against the other in Parliament, in the Press, as well as in general conversation, is, to say the least, somewhat bewildering.

In Uncle's time there were two definite parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, though there was a tendency to a split amongst the Conservatives, a section of which called themselves Junimea. My husband had good friends amongst these.

As mentioned before, at the time of our marriage the Conservatives were in power under Lascar Catargi, an earnest, straightforward, level-headed old gentleman of Moldavian origin and with a Moldavian accent, whose calm deliberation was backed by quiet and unemotional common sense. His wife, a worthy elderly lady, had no beauty, her nose having an unfair share of her face; but she was motherly if not entertaining. When her husband was in power she made efforts at elegance and I well remember how at a court ball she and I appeared one evening in similar dresses, an *Eau de Nil* creation of Spitzer's, with the only difference that, our ages and appearance being vastly dissimilar, it did not suit us in the same way. This worthy couple, how-

ever, passed away in my early youth, so that it was not for long that our paths converged.

Demetre Sturdza, chief of the Liberals, lasted much longer and played a greater part in my life; he was one of those most largely used as a bugbear and in his case I believe *der Onkel* did not need to take his name in vain. Demetre Sturdza really was a conscientious objector. Dry-grey, passionate, he was a small, intense little man, a great sectarian and as quarrelsome as a terrier, but an exceedingly clever and worthy gentleman. A peculiarity which caricaturists joyfully seized upon was a perennial tear in one of his eyes; I have never seen him without this tear. It has even on occasions given me false hopes as to his capacity of feeling. I innocently imagined that this tear had something to do with the feeling of emotion evoked when I had to plead with him, but the tear, alas, although I cannot exactly call it a political tear, had nothing to do with emotion but only with a too prolific lachrymal gland.

A real chief to his party, Demetre Sturdza was both feared and respected; Uncle had a high opinion of him, and his wife, who was a Cantacuzène, eldest daughter of the pleasant old lady who had been present at my wedding, had by far the sharpest tongue in Roumania. She was the wit of the party, but the milk of human kindness did not run through her veins. Her *bons mots* were sensational, but left little of the one on whom she sharpened her humour. She too was small and dry and being generally in ill-health, was deathly pale; she was usually more feared than liked; I do not think that I always found favour in her eyes.

In general we had a less good time when the Liberals were in power, they were more deadly in earnest, more unforgiving, more critical; with the Liberals at his elbow King Carol became *ein sehr unbequemer Herr*. I must be forgiven for expressing myself occasionally in German when speaking of Uncle; his education and conceptions were so characteristically German that this caustic language instinctively comes to my tongue when thinking of him. Sturdza had also studied in Germany, so the two men were of one mentality and a rather terrible force when banded together

against you. I have occasionally been up against them and the bruises received were pretty painful.

I cannot help feeling that the Conservatives were more easy-going. They were more often to be met in society than the Liberals; our contact with them was, so to say, less strictly professional, they admitted some play as well as work. Not so the Liberals; with them all was grim earnest at all seasons and at all hours of the day. It was for this reason, I suppose, that they gradually got the upper hand and wielded power more often and for longer periods than the Conservatives. In later years, when I was myself in harness, I mostly worked with the Liberals, but in my youth they certainly did not represent the easy side of life.

As is the way of the passing generation, to-day I regret the disappearance of those hard masters of yesterday; they were difficult to get on with, but there was iron in them. They knew only too well how to say "no," but when it was "yes" they stood by that "yes" and you felt you had a solid background. To-day we are in a state of transition, and are we not ever inclined to regret the "good old times" which we did not always entirely enjoy whilst they were in force?

But it was many a year before I learnt to appreciate the pith that lay at the core of the Liberals; when young, I preferred having the Conservatives in power, they appeared to be more lenient, also less exigent.

I do not in the least feel myself justified either in judging or criticizing those who were the political leaders of my country; my appreciations could easily be considered too feminine, too biased; we all like to imagine that we are impartial and yet are we not all of us, at times, inclined to judge with our feelings rather than with our heads? Men believe they are immune from this so-called feminine peculiarity, but I have often seen the contrary. But my description of our political men must be considered rather from the point of view of how they fitted or did not fit into my life, than critically. In later war years, of course, I had to deal with them more closely, but not in my youth.

Many of those who have left a name in this country were in the ministry which received me on my first arrival

in the country : Carp, Take Ionescu, Marghiloman, Alexander and Jaques Lahovary, Menelas Germani and others. Peter Carp, with his eyeglass screwed into one eye, I liked from the first. I cannot exactly say why, because, being exceedingly ironical he was rather frightening, but I felt attracted to him, I liked his face. He had an eagle nose, a queer-shaped bald head, and always looked particularly well-washed and clean. His sarcasms intimidated me, but I felt something human beneath his caustic attitude. I had the intuition that he liked and understood me. He appreciated my struggles, my desire to fight my way through and retain my personality in spite of obstacles. Once he said to me : "I have no anxiety about your future." Somewhat astonished I asked why. "Because I have watched the way you have ever and again overcome and got out of your difficulties." These words made me ponder. It was true, occasionally my difficulties had led me to the very edge of the precipice, but I had never quite fallen over the side ; I was however astonished that Peter Carp had followed up my various vicissitudes ; I never imagined that these important gentlemen took anything but an official interest in me. This was however a mistake ; many of them had even then an eye on me, weighing the pros and cons of my nature, interested for the country's sake as to what might lie slumbering within this unruly little woman. I was too busy living to ponder over my importance from a national point of view. It was a very long time before I considered myself important, and this explains why I was painfully astonished at the way my life was continually interfered with. I did so long to be left in peace ; this, however, was never granted me, neither then nor later.

All the Lahovarys were exceedingly intelligent, they always knew more than anyone else, had prodigious memories, also inherited by the younger generation, male as well as female. There were four brothers of whom two, Alexander and Jaques, were in the Government when I came to Roumania.

I never came into closer contact with Alexander Lahovary, whom I remember as a kindly but absent-minded gentleman with dark whiskers, who held his head as though always

searching for something beyond what was in the room. This came, I believe, from a way he had of pursuing his own thoughts even in a salon. I knew his wife, usually called Madame Symka, much better. She was *une grande élégante*, and always wore the latest Paris fashions; as before mentioned I was slightly in awe of her at first, she was so exceedingly worldly and clever and was the lady of the Conservative party who could best keep Madame Sturdza in order. Her wit was always ready to cap any of the Liberal lady's maliciousness, and in these "tongue duels" Madame Symka was an opponent of no small importance.

General Jaques Lahovary, the Minister of War, was a pleasant gentleman, gay and debonair and withal a capable soldier, much appreciated by King Carol but less so by the Prince, who in his youth was very severe and easily condemned those who were considered *léger*; the general being of an amorous disposition, the Prince disapproved of his gallant adventures. He wore a drooping moustache and an eye-glass, his nose was large and hooked between somewhat puffy cheeks. I remember listening without much understanding to the tales related against him, and though ready to espouse my husband's appreciation of people, I was inclined to like Jaques Lahovary because of his extreme and cheerful amiability; a lover of women, he also had pleasant words for the shy little princess.

Alexander Marghiloman was the smart gentleman of the party, well-dressed, smiling, with easy, ingratiating manners. He was rich, kept a racing stable and a well-appointed house. He liked receiving and his hospitality was lavish and a little ostentatious. Our contact represented the easy, pleasant sides of life; here for once politics seemed to be put in the shade by Derby winners and conversations about Paris, *le monde où l'on s'amuse* and the elegancies of fashion.

At his country house near Buzău, his wife (born Stirbey, later Madame Ion Brătianu), of whom I have already spoken, had helped him to plant a lovely garden. Here also was his stud. We very much liked going to Villa Albatros, it reminded us of life abroad; I loved the horses and also knew how to appreciate the delicious home-grown strawberries and lovely roses, a speciality of the house. A

day at the Marghilomans' villa was always a pleasant day and Marghiloman made us quite forget that he was a "Minister."

Take Ionescu, later so well known also in England, was a brilliant speaker; he was considered exceedingly clever and was always most agreeable to meet. In their discussions together I would hear the King and the Prince exchange their appreciations about this promising young man whom both predicted would make a fine career, but they always added: "If only one could count upon his character." I did not well understand what they meant and when I asked my husband he explained that he was not considered "absolutely moral in politics." Still, to-day, I am a bit vague as to the exact meaning of this. I cannot see that morals and politics have much to do with each other, but I suppose as in all things there are degrees. Take Ionescu was warm-hearted and understanding, broadminded, pleasant, but he lacked physical courage, which always astonished me. He even once admitted this to me in so many words, but this belongs to a much later period and cannot find its place here.

I knew very little of Menelas Germani except that he was considered a first-rate Minister of Finance. He had a curious trick, a sort of barking sneeze which interrupted all he said. I believe that he was in all ways a very honourable, trustworthy man who died before his time.

Now to return to Demetre Sturdza, that adamant, grey little man, all will and tenacity. I have only two souvenirs of more personal contact, the one tragic, the other comic, but even the tragic, as will be seen, had its humorous side. Both are worth relating, being characteristic of the times.

I had a good deal of trouble with my ladies-in-waiting and this chiefly came from the fact that *der Onkel*, for educational reasons, made those who were attached to us understand that they were beholden to him, not to us, and whenever a difference arose between us and any of our people, Uncle would once and for all, out of principle, take their part against us. This gave them the whip-hand, as they soon understood that in matters of conflict they would

always be upheld. In those days it was *bien vu* to create difficulties, and this right to complain against us made a nightmare of our youth as it left us entirely at the mercy of those who served us, but who could at any moment invent reasons for offence. The Prince and I thus endured the bitterest hours of humiliation; we never got a fair hearing, from the beginning every case was decided against us. We simply had to clench our teeth and stand it, but I was less inclined to passivity than my husband so that, although profoundly peace-loving, all fighting seemed to fall to my share.

And so it came to pass that on a certain 10th of May (our National day) I quite inadvertently offended my lady-in-waiting. I was then expecting my fourth child and second son, Nicolas, and being unable to stand church ceremonies during those months, I was to appear only at the parade, where I would meet the rest of the family coming from the official *Te Deum*. So I had my own little procession in a grand carriage *à la Daumont* with four horses. Mignon was then the Benjamin. She was about four years old and a child any mother could have been proud of; pink and white with flaxen hair and long-shaped blue eyes shaded by dark lashes, she was indeed a prize baby; besides, she was adorably amiable. From earliest youth all my children were trained to take part in official ceremonies, it came to them quite naturally and we had taught them to enjoy them thoroughly instead of being shy. The 10th of May was an occasion to dress them in their best, and I took a motherly pride in making them look as charming as possible. Always a favourite with the public, I also carefully chose my own gowns for these patriotic ceremonies, hat, cloak and parasol playing a great part in the whole scheme of colour.

My lady had come to fetch me and was to follow behind us in a second carriage. I duly ensconced myself in my grand barouche, the springs of which were so soft that you nearly fell on your nose when you stepped up to it, seating beside me my beloved child who looked like some marvelously grown flower in a show. The servants spread my finery around me and we were ready to start, when looking up, I saw my lady standing all alone on the threshold

and spontaneously, out of the fullness of my heart, I asked if she would not prefer driving with us rather than alone in the second carriage and offered her the seat opposite myself and the child. With some demur she accepted and off we drove, the public giving us a great reception. I was so occupied acknowledging all the ovations and at the same time happily engrossed by the child at my side that I had little leisure to observe my lady's face. I quite naturally imagined she was as pleased as I was ; who could feel anything but pleased in such radiant sunshine, everybody glad to see us and in one carriage with so adorable a child as Mignon ?

What was therefore my consternation on receiving next morning an exceedingly disagreeable note from King Carol announcing to me that my lady-in-waiting had handed in her resignation under the plea that yesterday I had offended and humiliated her in public by seating her with her back to the horses instead of beside me, and that he, the King, considered her complaint entirely justified. What defence had I to make ?

There have been hours in life when I have had the feeling that my brain was giving way under the pressure of too overpowering injustice. This was one of them. Every drop of blood in my body revolted against this outrageous accusation, also at the thought that any human being could have had daily contact with me for several years and yet believe me capable of wanting to humiliate him or her publicly or on any other occasion. I might be hasty, over-spontaneous, rash even, but to imagine that I, the warm-hearted, uncalculating woman, could in cold blood await an opportunity to mortify them in the eyes of all the world was too abominable. I got into such a state that all my household ran together in fear that Roumania's fourth hope should come to an untimely end.

My poor husband stood aghast ; he too was overwhelmed with the injustice done to his wife, but from the first, beaten, hopeless, knowing too well how he was never given a hearing and that it would be no good trying to justify me, because we were condemned from the beginning, without any hope of being able to defend ourselves.



"Then I'll send for Sturdza," I declared amidst the flood of my tears.

"Why for Sturdza?"

"Because I am sick of it. Because he is Prime Minister and he belongs to the chief accusers, but I am at the end of my tether and mean to have it out at last and to have my say."

Nando tried to protest, but in vain, I *had* to see Sturdza.

Anxious royal nurses and maids fussing around me had put me to bed, my eyes were ablaze, my temples throbbing, my cheeks burning red, fair hair in revolt, I lay amidst my pillows, an indignant, defiant, angry princess, very much Queen Victoria's granddaughter and daughter of Marie Alexandrovna, Grand Duchess of Russia. And to the bedside of this royal little hurricane came Demetre Sturdza with his small, shrinking body and perennial tear.

And I did indeed have my say.

All the pent-up indignation of many years of oppression flowed from my lips, I spoke both in French and German, changing from one language to another, no matter what tongue, as long as I could find words and expressions strong enough to convey all I had to say.

"Have none of you any mercy!" I cried. "Don't you understand that I am a transplanted tree, that my roots were torn out of my own ground? I am one against many, a stranger in a strange land, defenceless, dependent upon the mercy of a country to which I came in good faith. But I have been trapped; all that you wanted of me was that I should give royal children to the country, you do not in the least mind what my feelings are or my sorrows, my revolts, my loneliness, my struggles and the immense sadness of being eternally misunderstood. You were proud to import a princess '*de bonne famille*,' you appreciated my face, you all like to have a 'pretty Crown Princess,' you were glad also that I was healthy and that my manifold relations sit upon the different thrones of Europe. But what did any of you care about the inner 'me,' about my ideals, my hopes, about that great believing trust I put in you, about the timid girl who came from afar with the gift of her youth and goodwill. You judge me with your minds that are political clockworks, unfeeling, merciless, making no concessions for my youth.

In the dryness of your hearts you voluntarily misjudge me, because it is too much trouble to try and understand me or to treat me as a human being. Like spiders you sit watching if I will fall, and when I do, you rejoice, because you believe it gives you the right to redouble your severity, your subjugation, your desire to hold me in chains. You never pause to remember that I am a stranger amongst you who are all at home.

“Constantly, with bleeding heart, must I listen to the accusations raised against me, to the calumnies invented to blacken my reputation, and there is not one who raises a voice in my defence—they all howl with the wolves. I am supposed humbly to submit to all this injustice because of the honour you have done me by accepting me as wife of your future king ; but I can only declare that on my side I consider the honour just as much yours as mine. I am supposed to listen to the voice of the man in the street, but there is also another voice, the voice which cries from every drop of my blood, the voice of my ancestors ; there is not only the voice of the man in the street, but there is also the heart of the woman you are torturing.

“I know there is the difference of our races. I am an Anglo-Saxon, you are Latin. I am fundamentally a believer ; I believe in good, in God, in Justice, in Love and Pity. You are sceptics, cynics ; nothing seems holy to you, you scoff at everything, everywhere you see ugliness and treachery, you do not believe in a pure heart.

“You see the dark, ugly side of everything, whilst I see the light. I believe in ideals, in fidelity, in honour, in good intentions ; I am not eternally on the lookout for the wolf in sheep's clothing, whose every word is a lie. But even Latin and Anglo-Saxon could come to an understanding if there were no guile and treachery, no sneaky, tortuous desire continually to ensnare me and put me in the wrong and to gain a complete and unfair mastery over me.

“I came to Roumania like a young and joyous warrior ready to enter your ranks, to salute your colours, to march bravely in your lines, a song on my lips, glad of any adventure, any effort, daring, perhaps, unconventional, but yours, heart and soul.

“ But I am no match for your ruses, for your tricks and pitfalls, for your complicated artifices and chicanes ; I am destined to be eternally beaten if your weapons are suspicion and deceit. But whose the shame ? Mine or yours ?

“ But to-day this accusation of having wilfully hurt my lady’s feelings, of having sneakily awaited a public occasion to humiliate her, is so revolting, such a screaming injustice that at last the worm turns, the prisoner will stand no more.

“ My patience is at an end so I have sent for you, the Prime Minister, to declare that I am dead sick of it, will endure no more. I have decided to leave the country if this sort of thing continues ; I shall shake its dust off my heels, return to my mother, taking with me the unborn child, boy or girl, which was to have been my fourth gift to those whose only sport it has been to suspect, calumniate and willingly misunderstand me. I am no born slave, honours cannot buy me ; I cannot and will not submit to this sort of treatment and I warn you that at this hour I am ready to tear everything asunder. I am indifferent to the outcry there will be, to the scandal ; you can explain my desertion as you will, nothing matters to me any more ; all is at an end between us. I have only one overpowering desire left and that is to be free, free, free ! To be able to stretch up my arms to the skies and cry a cry of triumphant release. I am free, free, I have broken my shackles, torn asunder the chains which bound me ; I am free from persecution and dark intrigue, free to laugh and weep and to be a human being once more instead of a miserable puppet having to dance to any tune it amuses you to play. Free ! no more having to humiliate myself before those I despise because of the blackness of their minds, no more afraid, my feet on firm ground again instead of the thin ice of your biased misunderstanding. *Vogelfrei*, because I mean to burn my boats behind me and to turn my face towards a new fate.

“ There, Mr. Sturdza ! this is what I have to say to you. To-day I am indifferent if I shock or hurt or horrify you—for there is not an inch of my soul that you non-believers and calumniators have not bruised and wounded. This is the truth, all the truth, nothing but the truth, and may God

stand by me in greater mercy than you have shown—Amen !!!  
—”

Little Sturdza was aghast. Small, grey, trembling in his shoes, he stood there, the classical tear oozing from the corner of his eye, his dry fingers nervously clasped, looking with horror at this young trapped animal who had suddenly turned to bite the hand which had so long held the whip. Impotent he stood there, unable to put in a word or stop the avalanche of my bitterness, which, having at last broken its dams, poured out with all the exaggeration and passionate resentment of wounded youth and the righteous indignation of a confident heart outraged.

Looking back I am well aware of the absurdity of the scene, especially because of the contrast between the two actors and the incongruousness of the accused having suddenly turned accuser. There stood the iron, authoritative little man listening to words such as he had never before heard out of the mouth of any man, much less out of the mouth of a woman, and that woman a foreign little princess whom he thought to be holding on a leading rein. And into the bargain he was in mortal fear that my paroxysms of indignant wrath might bring about an accident which would ruin the country's hope of a second prince.

I have only a hazy recollection of the defence poor little Sturdza put up. Anyhow he tried to pacify me and spoke wise words in keeping with his honourable function. He tried to make me understand that in Roumania people were touchy, over-critical, that the Dynasty was new and had to advance slowly, with precautions. Well aware of this, King Carol wisely knew that every act must first be strictly demurred at for fear of taking a false step ; this was no doubt arduous but of paramount importance. I was young, unripe, I must therefore allow myself to be led and advised by those with deeper experience. People in this part of the world did not understand the liberty of my English ways, these gave rise to misinterpretations, I must take this into consideration. It might be the custom at my grandmother's court to offer your lady a back seat, here it was looked upon as an affront and my lady was therefore justified in her annoyance. He would, however, try to arrange things and explain that there

had been no premeditation on my part. I must not imagine that every man's hand was against me, on the contrary, I was much loved and the people were proud of the beautiful children I was giving them, but I must learn to be more considerate, more careful, less rash. Life was not a game but a serious business into which my betters had not only the right but also the duty to initiate me according to their wiser judgment and superior knowledge.

At that moment I think the tear actually rolled off the little man's cheek and seizing hold of my hand he implored me to put away all such sinful thoughts as desertion; this was unworthy of the brave soldier I professed to be and above all I must calm myself for the sake of the young life within me.

By this time my eyes were red, my nose a burning misery, my hair dishevelled, my strength spent; Nando came in almost timidly, anxious about what situation he would find. He patted me on my back with his beautifully shaped hand and promised that Mr. Sturdza would speak to Uncle, that I must no more excite myself, nor weep, that I must rest, etc. . . . etc.

So the storm abated, I blew my poor little nose, dried my swollen eyes, and lay there like a pricked balloon, entirely prostrate, but with a numb feeling of satisfaction at having relieved myself, in words at least, of the pent-up misery of many years of misunderstanding.

Nando was touchingly kind, and I can still feel the affectionate pressure of his long fingers on my shoulder. So gladly would he have helped, but having accepted his fate, what could he do? He had learnt obedience, his patience was without end; I, in my turn, must resign myself to the inevitable. I listened with the weakness of the exhausted, and yet faintly the question stirred in my brain—would I ever really enter the ranks of the resigned?

My second personal experience with Demetre Sturdza was of another kind but had also to do with the conflicts and storms of my young life. Here Ion Kalinderu reappears on the scene. Ion Kalinderu whom, although I have not yet mentioned him since the day of my arrival, played a great and, I may say, steady part in our lives.

Kalinderu was Uncle's classical deputy when we had to be admonished, when we needed "a talking to"; he was the instrument of Uncle's stately regime, the authorized channel of his kingly displeasure. Whenever we were considered unsubmissive, and Uncle did not want to do the scolding himself, Kalinderu was deputed to go and reprimand us and lead us back to the ways of virtue. The Kalinderu days were bad days, because his appearance on the scene almost always meant that we had in some way transgressed and that it was going to be thoroughly rubbed into us in so many weighty words.

Nando dreaded the Kalinderu days even more than I did; by force of circumstance he had been obliged to look upon these scoldings as serious and far-reaching, whilst, although I knew all that Kalinderu represented in Uncle's mind, there was just that touch of the comic about the worthy gentleman which tickled my sense of humour and there was also this: Kalinderu was not quite immune to my youth and femininity. When my husband was scolded it was indeed *ein Staatsakt*, but when the King's deputy passed from the Prince's to the Princess's chamber there was another light in his eye and in spite of his dignity he became just a little bit of a "fine fellow," and that wee difference was the chink in his armour where I was concerned. In fact he rather enjoyed this part of his mission. My room was pretty, full of flowers, my chairs soft, I was young and my hair was golden; *c'est tout dire!*

Kalinderu had his own way of pronouncing French; although his speech was rotund and fustian, his "es" were "ess" and this deprived his sermons of some of their dignity, because, however impressed and downcast I might be, a smile flickered in my mind even if I did not dare let it appear at the corner of my lips. Whenever my delinquencies had been more than usually reprehensible he would begin with the sentence which had become classical: "Esqué vous voulez dévénir Reine?" which always awoke in me the desire to reply: "This entirely depends upon more things than one"; but I knew when and when not to give way to levity and yielded to no untimely mirth in the great presence. But this let me say for Kalinderu, he was thoroughly and honestly

devoted to his Royal Family, he was the convinced and obedient servant of his sovereign ; but he was also kindly disposed towards those destined one day to take his master's place and had a really grandfatherly love for our children, especially for Elisabetha whose beauty, even at an early age, made an impression upon him.

On this particular occasion I am about to recount, Kalinderu appeared in a spirit of conciliation. He knew that at that period I was being more sinned against than sinning, but he guessed that storms were brewing and that the periodical necessity had arisen to divert into safe channels my growing dissatisfaction with life in general and my household in particular. It was still a little bit the old ill : *la Princesse s'ennuie* but with an added touch of danger as the *Princesse* was no more quite the same tame and idiotic little innocent of the first year ; she was mother of several children and had developed more than was considered safe.

So along came Ion Kalinderu, olive branch in hand, head cocked on one side, a sly look in his half-closed eye.

"Heh ! heh !" and the worthy gentleman twirled the black cord of his eye-glass between his fingers ; "was I not a little pale ? Would not a little change do me good ? But H.M. the King " (Kalinderu always rose from his seat, even if the seat were a soft arm-chair, when he pronounced this august name) " did not consider it opportune that I should go abroad for the present so he, Kalinderu, had come to propose that I should visit one of the Crown Domains under his charge ; H. M. " (again Kalinderu rose from his seat) " looked with favour upon this project, which he considered instrumental both in giving pleasure and education. Would I therefore accept an invitation for a two days' visit to Gherghița, near Ploëști ? And so that I should also have instructive as well as stimulating company H.M. had proposed that Mr. Demetre Sturdza, the Prime Minister, and Mr. Ion Bratianu, Minister of Communications, should accompany me, as well as my lady-in-waiting."

Eager for any occasion to see, whenever I could, something of the country, I willingly accepted this eminently seemly proposal, although the company of the Prime Minister was not in those days considered conducive to amusement,

but this was no question of amusement ; at King Carol's court the word amusement was taboo. This was to be an instructive excursion, pleasant also, but strictly within the limits of the permissible ; hence Demetre Sturdza, Ion Kalinderu and Ion Bratianu were on the borderline between the pleasant and the permitted, or perhaps partook a little of both.

So to Gherghița, near Ploești, I was duly conducted in this learned and decorous company, and there in a modest little house which had been embellished according to Kalinderu's taste, I spent two instructive days.

The walls of my room were hung with many photographs and prints of the Royal Family but more especially of Ion Kalinderu. Ion Kalinderu amongst his functionaries, amongst the peasants, Ion Kalinderu inspecting a bull, Ion Kalinderu with his booted foot on the trunk of a fallen tree, Ion Kalinderu with a gun over his back, Ion Kalinderu amongst baskets of pears and apples, besides giant heaps of maize, witnessing the exercising of colts and fillies in a field, the watering of pigs in a river, the feeding of chickens in a farmyard, the harvesting of grapes in a mighty vineyard, Kalinderu on a doorstep, on horseback, in a forest, Kalinderu beside a waterfall, and in all these photographs the administrator of the Crown Domains had a wise, a satisfied, nay even a sly little look in his eye. In most of these pictures his hand was thrust into his waistcoat, and when in sporting attire, a "cute" little dagger dangled from his belt. We loved these photographs of Kalinderu and added to them with our Kodaks whenever we could ; Kalinderu was always willing to be photographed.

I thoroughly enjoyed this royally sanctioned, somewhat comic, holiday away from the daily round. Demetre Sturdza was in full force during meals when I was his attentive pupil, whilst Bratianu came to the fore in field and forest, following me even on horseback, for Ion Kalinderu bred horses on his domains and the best of these were put at my disposal during my stay. It must not, however, be imagined that Bratianu and I rode *en tête-à-tête*, oh dear no ! Kalinderu accompanied me everywhere and we were followed by a goodly army of mounted peasants and woodmen, quite a regal procession in fact.



Everywhere I was given picturesque receptions, flowers were thrust into my hands, strewn under my feet ; I was taken to the church, to the school, to the farms, dairies and outhouses ; we visited neat model cottages and all the tidy and useful improvements Ion Kalinderu had introduced. All things were lengthily expounded and during meals Demetre Sturdza continued my education ; no time nor occasion was to be wasted.

Only Ion Bratianu, being, as our kind little *Täntchen* once expressed it, the only young man under forty her niece was allowed to meet, considered that enough was being done for my instruction and that he at least might add a more treble note to this puritanical holiday party, so instead of overwhelming me with more knowledge, he occasionally lightened the ceremonious atmosphere with a witty and well-placed joke.

And thus quite naturally enters Ion Bratianu, the only young man under forty that, because of his attributes, I was occasionally allowed to see !

Burdened with the glory of his father, Ion Bratianu was, however, a personality even without his name, and what was more important to me then, Ion Bratianu was an eminently agreeable companion and, let it be added, Bratianu II was a lady's man.

Tall, but even in his youth of somewhat heavy build, he had fine dark, velvety eyes, but a rather too high voice. Pleasantly ironical, watchful to the pitch of slyness, nothing escaped Bratianu's observation. His movements were slow, lazy-looking and he was never particular about his clothes. In those days, kept carefully under by Sturdza, it was nevertheless clearly evident that Ion Bratianu would certainly rise.

Sensing in me the future, Bratianu never made the mistake of considering me a negligible quantity ; I was given to understand from the beginning, that for him at least, I existed in more ways than one.

To say that I already liked him then, would be saying too much, but he could not be ignored ; he went out of his way to make himself pleasant, he was young, ambitious, far-seeing and from the first exceedingly well appreciated by

King Carol. Being Minister of Communications, it fell to his share to escort us when we moved about the country. A better travelling companion could not be imagined and it must be admitted that his company was stimulating, his conversation pleasant, witty, interesting. In spite of his agreeable ways, however, he never missed an occasion to let you feel that his jokes and amiabilities were only the outer cover of the very decided and unyielding personality hidden beneath. He was ready to banter and to be amusing, but we were never quite to forget that he was heir to those who to-day held the whip.

My husband liked him, but his liking was tinged with a slight feeling of diffidence as though unsure on what ground he was treading. There was something a little overpowering about Bratianu which awoke an uneasy sensation; his glove was of velvet but one was not very sure what lay beneath.

Bratianu had a way with ladies; he liked women, but in a somewhat Oriental manner. He would use his charm to the utmost but was very careful never to be the dupe.

It was our lot to work together later, when our time came. Our association has been much criticized, a thousand tales have been broadcast about it, many of them mere legends, but a mutual love for Roumania made us recognize in each other our capacity for work and active patriotism.

I do not wish, like Prince Bülow, whose reminiscences everyone is reading to-day, to quote all the things said to my advantage, but this prediction, made about us at a time when I, at least, was still much reprimanded and of small importance, is not without interest. It was pronounced by a very intelligent financier, unofficial adviser of King Carol whose audiences were given privately. This clever old gentleman declared: "There are two people who are destined to play a big part in the reign of King Ferdinand; Ion Bratianu and our fair little Princess." But this is reaching into the future and I must return to these personages in their youth.

The visit to Gherghița was not the first outing I had had in Bratianu's company. There had been an earlier excursion, this one also pompously organized by Ion Kalinderu, who

had persuaded H.M. that a *tournée* through the Moldavian Crown Domains in the Bistrița valley would be of educational importance to both the Prince and Princess.

For some unexplained reason King Carol hardly ever allowed us to travel about. When I came, my husband had hardly seen anything of Roumania, except certain of the more important towns which on official occasions he had visited with his uncle, so Nando was as pleasantly excited as I was to see this lovely valley, one of the most beautiful in Roumania. Ion Bratianu, because of his official status, was one of the party, and being witty he was of course amusingly conscious of our good Kalinderu's amiable absurdities. While being exceedingly deferential to one so much older and more solemn than himself, he knew well how to show up the elder gentleman's comic side, thereby establishing a sort of gay freemasonry between himself and the royal couple who were only too glad of an occasional laugh. Luckily Ion Kalinderu was so imbued with a sense of his own importance, so aware of his own value, that he was quite unconscious of any byplay.

Part of the excursion was done on a raft down the river through quite beautiful scenery, a most lazy and delightful mode of conveyance which entirely suited Bratianu, who liked his ease. Kalinderu never relaxed his pompous attitude, but Bratianu like to unstiffen and loll about, nor did he belong to those who appeared in a top-hat on country excursions; Bratianu understood the comfort of country clothes, though he never tried to look sporting.

Many miles were also done in local carriages on long and dusty roads, and in the evening we were lodged in the hospitable houses of the Crown Domains much in the style of Gherghița but in quite a different landscape; mountains and forests instead of plains. The walls of these houses were likewise copiously ornamented with portraits of Kalinderu.

We also visited the convents of Agapia and Varatic and the monasteries of Neamț and Bistrița, which were occasions for crowded and picturesque receptions when nuns or monks flocked around us like great dark birds. There was much ringing of bells and strewing of flowers before our feet, also much nasal singing in the churches followed by the eating of

very sweet and sticky jams in the Starițz's or Starițza's reception rooms.

These had the well-known convent atmosphere, being musty with the reek of old apples, cold wood smoke and the dust of the many bright rugs decorating both walls and floor. There were also queer odds and ends brought from Jerusalem or Mount Athos, carved shells, inlaid woodwork and pressed flowers of which the anemones had astonishingly retained their blood-red colour. Now and again a fine old icon, which in those days I had not yet learned to appreciate, hung side by side with staring chromos of saints and bishops.

I loved these far-off, solitary places ; there was poetry about them and the old-world atmosphere of things that do not evolve, retaining through the generations their ancient traditions, superstitions and habits which the artist side in me hopes will never be effaced by progress.

We spent a night at one of these convents ; I remember that it was a moonlight night and that Bratianu told me that he was always sentimental on moonlight nights even in a convent. But when my husband offered me a cigarette, Ion Kalinderu stayed his hand : "*Esqué vous voulez dévénir Reine ?* then please Your Royal Highness no smoking in a convent."

Those good old days !

Other prominent members of the Liberal party were Jean Duca, the youngest of them, and Mr. Costinescu, who looked like a handsome old Father Christmas. He was not supposed to be as benevolent as his looks, but he was rich, had a numerous and prosperous family and had the appearance of a patriarch. As far as I was concerned he always showed me much sympathy. Jean Duca was slight, wiry, and wore eye-glasses. His father, an eminent engineer, was head of the railway ; he was hollow-cheeked and delicate-looking and died too soon. Jean Duca was a brilliant speaker ; he and Bratianu were looked upon as the two most promising young men of the Liberal party. I knew Jean Duca less in his younger days than later on. His keen, inquisitive, appreciative mind made of him stimulating company. Of Jean Duca I always said that a better audience than he was could

not be imagined ; he took such an interest in all you had to say, encouraged you in your peculiarities and rejoiced over each spicy bit of information he could obtain. He had ready enthusiasms and the great people in history stimulated his vivid imagination. He loved to hear my tales about Queen Victoria, my Russian relations, King Edward, and the Kaiser. A confirmed democrat, he was nevertheless irresistibly attracted to the "Great." All that was *crâne*, *panache*, roused his admiration and he had a schoolboy's delight in a good story, in a *bon mot*. He was not a lion hunter, but success impressed him ; the world was a stage to him and he preferred the great actors. His education had been principally French, but he admired England and all that came from that Blessed Isle. He, with Take Ionescu, was one of the few political men who spoke English. He knew every Derby winner and admired Lord Rosebery. All quick and sensational careers impressed and fascinated him. He was never a snob, but had a pleasantly fresh delight in success. Jean Duca and I had a good deal to do with each other ; we later, so to say, grew old together ; he never belonged to the "bugbears," but being excitable and hasty, which last characteristic was also in a way mine, we had hours of disagreement, but we were always friends enough to "have it out."

Jean Duca was a keen, sometimes too keen, politician and his party, of which he was the chief, his very *raison d'être*.

There were many other politicians who might be mentioned, such as Theodor Rosetti, Alecu Constantinescu, Michel Pherikidi, Juvara, Lascar, Maiorescu, Georges Cantacuzène, Constantin Olanescu, General Manu, Fotin Enescu, Georges Marzescu, etc., but these were not so intimately mixed up with my private life, though many will appear again later when I have to speak of my riper years and those events which counted double in my life.

Amongst the diplomats of our country I had many friends. Foremost in my youth were the three Ghyca brothers.

The name Ghyca is widespread in Roumania and when written with a "y" instead of an "i" it spells blue blood. There were several reigning Prince Ghycas in Roumanian

history. But the name was so recurrent that an amusing anecdote is related about a foreigner, who entering Roumanian society, was presented to so many Ghycas that he finally imagined that Ghycas was a specially honourable title; most Ghycas he had met having been elderly gentlemen, when finally a young Ghycas was introduced to him he exclaimed: "So young and already Ghycas!"

Emil, Alexander and Grégoire Ghycas were all three Ministers in different posts at the same time, one in Berlin, one in Vienna and one in Constantinople.

All three were charming, but the most sympathetic was Emil Ghycas of Vienna. His outward appearance was irresistible. A wee man with a round snub nose, and hair like feathers on his head, later quite white, but then iron-grey, he had short legs and turned in his toes. His complexion was pink-and-white, his smile and his jokes irresistible. An eminent diplomat, much appreciated in each post he occupied, he was admirably seconded by his intelligent and aristocratic wife Catherine (born Florescu), whose size exactly suited that of her husband. These two were the most pleasant couple imaginable, witty, sociable, dignified; to pass an hour in their company was always delightful.

Grégoire Ghycas was married to a sister of Queen Natalie of Serbia, an exceedingly lovely woman with the most perfect features and the much praised olive skin. She was greatly admired in Berlin society where even the Kaiser, so it is said, was not blind to her good looks, though the Kaiser was not much of a ladies' man. Mariette Ghycas, although clever, pleasant, and even original, was not as easy to get on with as her sister-in-law, Catherine. Mariette could on occasion be sharp and prickly, but being a great admirer of her beauty I was always pleased to see her; both she and Catherine generally spent the summer at Sinaia with their children, where they inhabited two pretty villas side by side in the same garden.

The third Ghycas brother, Alexander, was the most witty of the three. He was considered a *mauvais sujet* and separated from his wife. He had three children, a daughter and two sons, one of whom later married a singer and had plenty of money to spend whilst his father was

supposed to thrive on debts. Jeanne, the daughter, had the most beautiful eyes, liquid brown eyes which appeared to be burning hot. Jeanne was mostly looked after by her Aunt Mariette.

Alexander Ghyca for some reason had a great liking for me. He was a stout, jovial gentleman whose jokes when in male company were, I believe, salty, but he liked female society which got him, so it was said, into many a difficulty. He and Jean Balaceanu were considered amongst the most witty men in Roumania. Alexander Ghyca belonged to a set that it was not considered orthodox for a young princess to appreciate, but once, during a period when I was sadly down on my luck, Alexander Ghyca, whose large heart could not bear to see a young thing so depressed and cast down, said a word to me I shall never forget. I was moping alone in a corner before the birth of one of my children whilst a gay company of people, less young than I, were playing tennis. Ghyca came up to me (like his irresistible brother Emil, Alexander Ghyca also turned in his toes) and looking at me with fatherly affection said, "Believe me, my fair young Princesse Lointaine, people love you much more than you are allowed to believe. Not every man's hand is against you as you are given to understand, the country loves you and counts upon you, so take courage, there is no reason for despair!"

Frivolous and perhaps reprehensible Alexander Ghyca! I wonder if he realized the immense and healing comfort of his words? A kind word spoken in the hour of distress is indeed as dew on wilting grass. A favourite German writer of mine says that "ingratitude is dearth of experience" and I would like to add that "gratitude" is as manna to the soul. He who surrenders himself whole-heartedly to the feeling of gratitude is a rich man.

I was rich after those few words pronounced by Alexander Ghyca, and then for the first time looking at him more carefully, I realized that it was from her father that Jeanne had inherited her hot, velvety, brown eyes.



PAULINE ASTOR DRESSED AS A ROUMANIAN GIPSY.  
*(Snapshot taken by myself.)*





## *Chapter VIII*

### MY FRIENDS

**A**N everlastingly burning question in royal lives is the question of friends.

No man, royal or otherwise, can get through life without friends, so at least it seems to me. "Friend" is one of the most sacred words in the human language ; whole books have been written upon the subject of friendship, and to be pitied is he who has not known the comfort, the beauty, the inspiration of friendship.

In the case of royalty, however, friends are undoubtedly a complication. King Carol, that wise, self-controlled, level-headed monarch, was against friendship for princes. He knew the difficulties, the danger even, of friendships in a palace, and when I first arrived he had solemnly decreed that I should have no friends. At first this was possible because, being still dependent upon the Prince and the King, I was kept strictly away from people of my own age, or if I ever met them, it was in a crowd, quite impersonally. But I was too vital, too magnetic also, not to attract friendship. My very isolation made others all the more desirous of breaking through the defences which encircled me ; besides, my immense urge towards life and liberty could not very long be kept in bounds. I was not one of those who submit to starvation of heart and soul.

But to-day, having travelled a long way, I understand why Uncle was so apprehensive of friends for the young ones of his family. Youth reaches out to youth and knows little of discrimination ; the urge for companionship, for a kindred soul, is so great that dross can often be taken for gold.

Youth is rash, hasty, seldom pauses to weigh consequences, sees all things through the prism of its desires, and when, as in my case, the heart is without guile, caution is

unknown and traps are easily laid, but every misadventure amongst royalty inevitably becomes public property, and therefore they have not, like others, the right of making mistakes, or getting into trouble.

All this Uncle knew, but at our age we could not accept his wisdom ; each human being must find out for himself, it is seldom that another's experience is helpful ; we listen, but we do not assimilate ; another man's toothache is not mine, and never can I be entirely in sympathy with his pain unless I have toothache myself.

In my turn, I have much pondered upon the problem of royal friends and have come to no satisfactory solution. Friends will be, must be, but they will never be easy to "canalize" and keep within satisfactory bounds.

In the lives of simple mortals there may be good or bad friends, but there is not that inequality of caste which from the first creates a disproportion of values. Royal friends, however excellent, selfless and modest, are an object of envy to those outside ; they inevitably become *le point de mire*, are approved or disapproved of according to the seldom quite impartial appreciation of those who have *not* yet been chosen. "Put not your trust in princes," and yet how often have I of the inner circle seen that it was much more those outside who obliged the Prince to become faithless than the Prince's own fickleness. I have witnessed and have myself experienced the tragedy of having been compelled by public opinion to abandon a friend.

There are also the friends of your friends—these are often harmful, as anything in the form of a clan is dangerous in a palace ; this can be observed all through history and yet it happens so easily and almost always unperceived by the one around whom all centres.

Nothing can be done privately in a palace ; everything is known, secrets are almost impossible, and the danger of friends' friends is that they often use the favourite as a channel for their own ambitions, as a means of reaching the royal ear. It is not only the Prince or the King who receives flattery, but also his friend, and the friend perhaps is still less immune to flattery than the royal gentleman himself. Few are strong or impersonal enough not to be glad of being

the chosen, glad in a selfish way, in a way which finally harms the one to whom he is giving his devotion.

Although an ardent defender of my own kind, I am one of those people who can look at things from all sides and I must admit that the language of courts is mostly flattery. This is not because the royal personage demands this of others, nor that those who approach them mean to be false, but throughout the ages this has been the way ; the great, royal or otherwise, are approached with pleasant words. They inspire awe because imbued with power, and this is the curse of power that no man approaches it without beforehand preparing his words so that they can be acceptable. And each man who comes to his sovereign brings his own truth according to his own light, but that truth has passed through many brains before it reaches the royal ear ; it is therefore unfair to say that a royal man never hears the truth, rather let it be said that he hears too many truths and is often at a loss which to accept, and it is but human to accept that truth most pleasant to hear.

Power is both glorious and terrible ; within it lies the seed of every possibility, but few who have been given the right to wield it are big enough, strong enough not to be contaminated by its corroding effect. The very awe it inspires in those who approach it encourages the great to abuse that strength which is theirs.

I have never wielded absolute power, but I have been close to those who have, and I was always astonished and saddened by the way their clearness of view diminished according to how they reacted towards the flattery of those intent upon swaying their will.

This is not peculiar to royalty, but to all those who are in high places. Those in opposition or standing outside, unless moved by jealousy or petty malice, generally retain a clearer, more rational view. But when in their turn they are in power I have seen with distress how their clear-sightedness dwindled, and they began doing exactly those things that they had criticized whilst merely onlookers.

To King Carol's honour it must be said that he was level-headed beyond the average. He loved power, nor was he completely without certain vanities, but they were small

vanities and it cannot be said that they ever mastered him. He believed himself a great politician, probably he was ; anyhow, he was wise and full of deliberation, and the incense burnt before him never turned his head. He had a high idea of his own ability, his ego was paramount, but having himself entirely in hand and having gone beyond desire, he was strong enough to dominate others and knew how to keep them at a safe distance. He certainly knew how to form his own version of the truth out of the many truths others brought to him ; King Carol had no human needs, his heart was just as much under his control as his nerves and his desires ; he had put every passion behind him. He stood alone, his eye was clear, his will of iron, he was swayed by no personal sympathies or antipathies, he was impartial, impersonal, provident ; he believed in his right to rule.

*Der Onkel* was a hard master ; his shadow lay over our youth like a weight, but Uncle wielded power as it should be wielded, passionlessly, coldly, justly ; in his hands power was not abused. That he had no understanding of the young was the result of his too great mastery over himself ; to him, all else but work seemed futile, unworthy, almost incomprehensible. Uncle was a pedant, but on a large scale, and Uncle never felt the need of a friend.

But I needed friends. . . .

In writing this, many faces pass before my eyes, male and female, faces of great and small, faces of many nationalities. Both joy and pain are attached to their memory, fun and laughter, but also many a tear.

Sometimes you choose your friends, sometimes they choose you ; chance and circumstance play of course a great part, but it is all the same the law of attraction which is chiefly responsible in the selection of friends. There are also, alas, those that you tolerate out of pity because you have not the courage to rebuff their advances—these occasionally become heavy weights on your road. It were better to be pitiless from the beginning, but I regret to say that all through life I have been a coward in this way and no end of complications have arisen from this weakness of being oversensitive of hurting another's feelings. I always hated

humiliating even the most unworthy or uninteresting ; but to burden yourself, out of pity, with those uncongenial to you is a mistake you nearly always live to rue ; I have made this mistake more than once.

At first, because of my enforced isolation, my friends were chiefly chosen amongst foreigners, more especially from amongst the diplomats in residence at Bucarest.

Sir Hugh and Lady Wyndham, the British Minister and his wife, had two daughters, Florence and Nelly. Florence had great talent for painting, she was a serious, quiet girl and shared my artistic interests, whilst Nelly was always laughing and was a keen rider ; so Nelly used to accompany me on horseback and many a splendid gallop have we had together which cemented a pleasant companionship based upon our mutual love for this sport.

The Wyndhams were followed by Sir John and Lady Kennedy, who had one daughter and four sons, three of whom were killed later in the Great War. Yone Kennedy had been born in Japan, hence the unusual name of Yone which has a melodious exotic sound. She was a sweet-faced, fair-haired girl, somewhat younger than myself ; we saw a lot of each other and Yone and I became great friends. We were very dissimilar in character, and occasionally I rather astounded, not to say shocked, my friend, who was timid and a little old-fashioned and very pious. I was more turbulent, rasher, less careful as to appearances ; also I propounded views upon independence which rather astonished Yone. I slightly awed her, but her loving heart knew nothing but loyalty ; she did not judge when she did not understand, but occasionally a disturbed, almost hurt expression would pass over her face when my unconventionality seemed to overstep the proprieties of her own very severe code.

Yone and I shared impressions, enjoyed outdoor exercise together, discussed books, art, social questions and were interested in our neighbours. Our opinions about people were not always the same but this was stimulating. Though diffident, sometimes almost timorous and certainly oversensitive, Yone was one of those people whose fundamental principles are unshakable ; there was a strength beneath her apparent weakness which I always admired. Yone also

accompanied me on horseback though she was a less daring rider than Nelly Wyndham, but as the Kennedys remained longer at Bucarest, our association lasted longer and our friendship was not uprooted when came the sad hour of parting, and in later life we never lost sight of each other.

The inevitable transferring of diplomats from one post to another was a continual source of heartache. I have known many an hour of sadness when the relinquishing of friends was a real uprooting and all the more melancholy because it was final, a slice of life never destined to be renewed.

In the far-off country to which I had come, and because of the strict prohibitions to which we were submitted, the diplomatic friends and acquaintances played a big part in our lives.

In pre-War days the personnel of the Austro-Hungarian Legation was always smart and numerous and very pleasant from a social point of view, and more than one friend did I have in their midst. Foremost amongst these was a young and agreeable couple, Count and Countess Fritz Larisch. He was an excellent rider and kept fine horses. His wife May, a lovely rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed little lady, became one of my closest friends. She always looked happy and her fair hair spread like a halo round her beaming face. "Little Countess," or "My faithful follower" as I called her, was too busy creating a family to be able to do much riding except on a mountain pony, in fact she was never much of a horse-woman although it was the principal passion of the Larisch family. But although this favourite sport could not be shared, we saw much of each other and a warm, steady friendship grew up between us, based upon the good and pleasant things of life. It was veritably an association of two life-loving young women at a period when life was easy and the world prosperously at peace. There was never anything turbulent or tragic about our friendship, it was all sunshine and smiles. "Fritzi," who was adored by his wife, often rode with me and later he brought a small pack of hounds from his house and organized drags, which I much enjoyed.

Round about this period, and also a little later, there were still several other pleasant young Austrians at the Austro-Hungarian Legation, such as Graf Lago, Rubido-Zichy,

Colonel Roswadowski, Baron Gall, all of them keen riders and dancers. Then there was Otto Franz, tall, interesting looking, with a humorous eye and secretive smile ; he had been recently operated on so could not ride, but he was exceedingly intelligent and a very pleasant companion. There were also Pejatchewitch, Czekonics and still others such as May and Carl Fürstenberg, he being the younger brother of Max Fürstenberg, the Kaiser's great friend ; and the Otto Czernins, and others who have now dispersed into many countries after the collapse of the great dual Empire.

May Fürstenberg was one of the Festetics girls who had driven with me during that unforgettable battle of flowers in Nice when we had had such a success in our orange-decorated carriage. She was a lovable woman with a slow mode of speech and a wee cast in one eye which added to the charm of her face. She was one of the most passively gentle women I ever met ; nothing upset her equilibrium, she would speak of amazing events with perfect calm, also recount the most surprising anecdotes as though they were child's talk, never accentuating the point ; I have never met another woman so benignly, emotionlessly candid ; every incident, even the most astounding, would be related *sans commentaires*, in the same even, gentle, unemotional voice. It was a delight to listen to her, but she was in no wise trying to be funny. Her complexion was perfect and she had a lovely short nose ending in an attractively square tip ; her heart was of gold, but nothing could shake her equanimity.

Otto Czernin had an English wife, daughter of Lord Grimthorpe ; their *ménage* was somewhat stormy and later they separated. She was most agreeable and cultivated but over highly strung. He was a great sportsman and had a dogged chin, *à la Mussolini*, and cold, rather fierce eyes. I was friends with both of them and used to hear both sides of the question and neither resented the other confiding in me. In a strange way I became for a time, because of their mutual devotion to me, a link between them.

But my dearest friends of all were the Astors.

I met Waldorf Astor and his sister Pauline the year of King Edward's Coronation. We were asked down to Clive-



den for lunch on the classical Sunday when everyone leaves town. It was an invitation like any other, a mere politeness, but it was the starting point of a very dear friendship which has meant much in my life.

From the very moment they were introduced to me I felt a strong and spontaneous sympathy for this charming brother and sister, and they too liked me without reserve.

The luncheon-party was such a success that the Astors invited my husband and myself with our suites to come and spend several weeks at Cliveden whilst we were waiting for the Coronation, which had been put off owing to King Edward's sudden illness.

A more charming couple than Waldorf Astor and his sister Pauline it has never been given me to meet. By some happy chance there was a perfect affinity of taste between us, somehow we looked at life in the same way; the same things amused or bored us, we had much the same opinions and ideals.

More highly strung than I was, both brother and sister found in me a reliable and understanding companion; although somewhat older than they were I was able to share their every hope and fear, their aspirations and ambitions, and they gave me unstintedly their young and charming sympathy.

Those few weeks at beautiful Cliveden belong to the most perfect memories of my life. It was pure bliss. Rather starved of those things I had been born to, I found at Cliveden a healthy life of freedom in superb surroundings with young companions entirely congenial.

Mrs. Astor had died when her children were quite young and Mr. Astor, absorbed by his many affairs, was a rather grim and unbending parent with tastes and habits that his children did not share. Immensely rich, conventionally worldly but at the same time a great student, he had nothing of the loving parent about him, and though he was full of excellent principles, he rather over-awed his children. Although they were very popular and always had the house full of acquaintances, there was a certain loneliness about the young people which left room for the absorbing friendship which grew up between us.





WALDORF ASTOR ON "AIRSHIP."

There was also a younger brother John, then at Eton, and a little invalid sister suffering from a severe heart complaint. Pauline was like a mother to the sick child and spent most of her nights looking after her, as it was during the night that the child suffered most.

Waldorf had had a fall during a game of polo and had damaged his knee so that he had to walk about with a stick. But young and sport-loving as he was, although unable to sit astride just then, he would accompany me on long rides, on a lady's saddle, most generously lending me his polo ponies in turn, and thus together we rode all over the country, long rambles through exquisite scenery, occasionally going for gallops in Windsor Park.

The degree of enchantment this free, easy English country life brought me is impossible to describe. It was *absolute* happiness.

Every atom of body and soul were content. I knew it was only a respite, an oasis on life's road, a time that would never come again, but I lived those weeks with all the ardour of my nature which knows how to enjoy, knows also how to be gloriously grateful for all good received. All that I received at Cliveden was good, healthy, whole-hearted, and the companionship of this perfect brother and sister was more precious to me than I can say.

Pauline had the most charming face, framed by dark waving hair. Her eyes were large, brown and exceedingly bright, they looked just a little startled as though everything came to her as a surprise. She moved with perfect grace, was animated, witty, and had a delightful laugh.

There was something of a gazelle about her and she had a quiet dignity seldom met with in one so young. In spite of her delicious gaiety, a haze of sadness lay over her, owing no doubt to the sickness of the little sister and to having lost her mother too soon.

There was also something of this sadness about Waldorf; there was a great likeness between him and his sister. He too had large velvety brown eyes and a charming smile. Tall and exceedingly slim he had a certain shyness of manner which added to his charm. His voice was low-

pitched and exceedingly sympathetic. Never had I met a more attractive blending of gaiety and good manners than in these two young people who had come from beyond the seas.

That same autumn the little sister died very suddenly and both Pauline and Waldorf came to me to Sinaia, he to recover from an operation to his knee and she to get over the first terrible loneliness after the death of the child to which she had been foster-mother.

This started the delightful habit of yearly visits. Both Pauline and Waldorf were delicate, and although I knew nothing of illness, I looked after them in turns. Older than they were, and yet still young, I used in a way to mother them, although I was their companion as well. They loved Roumania, appreciating its beauty and originality, and their great interest for the country did much to strengthen my growing love for the land of my adoption. Their perfect friendship gave me courage and hope and brought me a companionship of which I had been starved. Also their humorous way of helping me to meet and overcome my difficulties gave me a fresh outlook upon life and a greater confidence in my surroundings.

Waldorf had an extraordinarily sweet and unselfish nature, very unusual in one so young. He was exceedingly thoughtful for others and was continually inventing occasions for giving pleasure, and this charming quality, coupled with a keen sense of humour, made everything, even official ceremonies and national festivities, a source of amusement.

King Carol appreciated these young people ; their manners were so charming and the intelligent interest they took in the country pleased Roumania's stern ruler so that he more or less sanctioned this friendship with his approval.

Of course there remained the danger of jealousies cropping up to destroy a companionship which was like life itself to me ; accustomed to tremble for all I loved and having deeply suffered through the many intrigues of which the High Inquisitor was the chief centre, I no longer dared count upon peace. But the perfect tact of this brother and sister steered us more or less safely over the reefs that might at any time

have sunk the boat of our friendship. Although younger in years, they were more worldly-wise than I was, they understood how to repress my over-rash impulses and taught me many a lesson of moderation. They loved me as good friends should, not blindly but with hearts always ready to understand and help.

Horses were a passion we shared. Waldorf was a beautiful rider and gave me many a useful hint about riding, the sport I most loved. I was of course an able and eager pupil, and followed up his advice "intelligently" as he used to say. He would find horses for me in England and many a beloved mount has thus come to my stables, polo ponies, hunters, hacks and thoroughbreds, the most beloved of all being a polo pony with a vicious eye, called Airship. A regular beast of a horse he was, bright chestnut with four white stockings, having gained his name because he was always "in the air," never starting off without a fine show of bucking, sometimes leaving the ground all four feet at once. But Airship was beautiful with a beauty which still makes my heart beat when I think of him.

Waldorf also secured ponies for the children. He was their idol, they worshipped "Mr. Anne," as for some unknown reason they called him, and many are the adventurous riding parties we undertook together.

We also climbed the Sinaia mountains and camped amongst the clouds in low, military tents; we visited the different studs of the country and Waldorf taught me much about horse-breeding and pedigrees. All things were full of interest to us and I took my friends about as much as I was allowed, but in those days motors were only just beginning and we did not yet possess one of our own; besides, our excursions were limited by King Carol's will.

Four years of perfect friendship, sharing all things—I look back upon them with delight and gratitude. They were almost cloudless, but of course life was waiting for my friends and finally parted us. Pauline married first, then Waldorf two years later, if I rightly remember. I cannot say that great loneliness did not remain in their wake, but life is full of uprooting and renunciations. Nothing could destroy our friendship, but the dear close comradeship had

of course come to an end ; only the fervent gratitude remained for what had been so good.

Little by little as the years passed and my children became bigger, my life broadened and different friendships were cemented with the people of my country.

The wildly worldly life I have been supposed to live is a legend invented by those who vaguely heard rumours about my fine clothes and so-called eccentricities. For many I was "la Princesse Lointaine," living in a country near the Rising Sun ; this fired the imagination, and the moment a woman is spoken of as "pretty" people want to know all about her, she excites interest more than anything else and gossip would have it that I was tremendously gay, whilst in reality our life was curiously austere and circumscribed.

The truth is that I had a profound and invincible *joie de vivre* which could not be overlooked and which no disapproval or hedging in had been able to suppress. Wherever I went, I carried with me this air of enjoying life, everything was interest and stimulation to me, so I quite naturally also stimulated those with whom I came in contact. Irresistibly they found themselves carried away on the wave of my enthusiasms without pausing to consider why. I myself had no particular reason for this extreme vitality except my prodigious health and love of nature and all things beautiful.

There certainly were times when my artistic temperament made me indulge in clothes somewhat different from what were usually worn, sometimes too showy or picturesque, I believe. But my excuse is that we women of my day still more or less belonged to *les Romantiques* ; besides, Roumania was only a half-discovered country and all that was rumoured concerning it had the prestige of distance and the unexplored. Also I had an imaginative and daring mind and being buried away from the part of Europe I had been born to, I adopted my own ways and style, regardless of criticism, rather dangerously indifferent to anything but my passion for beauty.

Roumania is a land of poetry and, being barred from

much I had been accustomed to, I finally created my own atmosphere which was approved or disapproved of according to the temper of my critics.

I was in what might be called my "prime" when several young women more or less of my own age came into my life, Nadège Stirbey, Maruka Cantacuzène, Hélène Soutzo, Hélène Crețianu, Sybil Chrissoveloni, Marthe Bibescu and others, and although there were still occasional rows and prohibitions instigated by the ever-watchful and never-disarmed enemy in the "Old Palace," I was less severely controlled than formerly. The truth was that King Carol and I were gradually becoming friends. He began to trust me and I understood him better.

Maruka Cantacuzène was foremost amongst this group of friends now gathered around me; she was a Rosetti by birth, a Moldavian of blue blood. Tall, handsome, dark-eyed, exceedingly striking, she could occasionally be erratic and was certainly an original. Her company was stimulating but it was no good going against her queer ideas. Married to Michel, eldest son of Georges Cantacuzène, known as the "Nabab," she was rich and independent and lived exactly as she pleased, quite indifferent to critics. For instance, nothing would induce her to accept an invitation; it was always in her salon that she expected us to gather, and being one of those people who get their own way, we submitted to her smiling tyranny and many a pleasant evening have we spent in her darkened rooms, for Maruka had manias and one of these was to sit in the half-dark. A big fire would be lit on the hearth, no other illumination being allowed. This more than once gave rise to comic incidents, as Maruka would occasionally invite outsiders who were not initiated into the special rites of her sacred salon. These, unaccustomed to such dim chambers, would stumble over the stools and chairs before they could grope their way to where we sat.

We mostly came together to listen to good music, our well-known violinist and composer Enescu being the great friend of the house, and many a delightful hour have I spent beside Maruka's fire, silent whilst he held us beneath the spell of his magic bow.



It must however be confessed that my friend had an almost perverse liking for the absurd in every form. She would take herself seriously up to a certain point and beyond this everything was a huge joke, including her manias, habits and restrictions, and when together we often laughed like two schoolgirls, and it was always Maruka who used to create the absurd situations, and everybody had to join in with the laughter, even the most serious diplomats.

When I think back on certain incidents in Maruka's darkened chambers I am still inclined to laugh even though all by myself.

One evening a short-sighted lady, groping amongst the furniture for her fur, found herself tugging at the tousled hair of an exhausted pianist who was dozing in a deep arm-chair, whereupon shrieks of delighted laughter on the part of our hostess.

One day, this was many years later—after the War—Maruka had moved into a large house where she had arranged a huge sort of divan draped in red brocade. I was seated at one end of this throne-like construction and she at the other. Whilst Enescu played there was of course perfect silence but my friend, always full of absurd ideas, decided that we should be connected through a silken “scarf” of which I should hold the one end, she the other, and through this binding piece of silk we would silently communicate our emotions to each other. It was quite a Marukian idea, characteristic of her amusing turn of mind. Between the two corners where she and I sat enthroned there was ample space for others, and from time to time my friend would call one or the other of the guests to come up and talk to us.

It occasionally amused her to have what she called a pompous party, including diplomats, politicians, professors, doctors and elderly ladies. She liked me to come to these and help her deal out amiabilities and never shall I forget how on the day of the silken “scarf,” she all of a sudden beckoned to a very portly and important foreign Minister to come and talk to us. Much pleased, our ally lowered his tremendous bulk on the couch between us, turning first this way and then that so as to be amiable to both of us

at the same time. Suddenly Maruka remembered our silken link, and stretched out her hand for her end of it, but the circumference of the gentleman embedded on the soft couch had so diminished the length of our scarf, that there was none of it left, the weight of the diplomat had made it shrink to nothing. Although we were both of us much more staid ladies in those days, the discovery was so absurd that Maruka gave vent to one of her most ringing fits of laughter, the innocent guest quite ignorant of what had suddenly moved her to such tremendous and unexpected mirth.

There was a whole-hearted, spontaneous absurdity about Maruka which made of her a delightful companion.

Michel Cantacuzène, her husband, was a kindly gentleman, who was half-shocked, half-amused at his wife's unconventionalities. Occasionally he wanted to be pompous, but Maruka always took the wind out of his sails, there was no standing up against her laughter.

Michel Cantacuzène was killed a few years ago in a motor accident and Maruka shut up her fine house with the red-draped couch, and there are no more meetings in her darkened chambers: she has become almost a recluse, but harking back I can still hear her wonderful laugh and can also see the heavy diplomat sitting on our silken scarf; *mais tout passe*. . . .

Hélène Soutzo was quite a different type. A Chrissoveloni by birth, she was of Greek origin and had something of a Tanagra about her appearance; a small head, carried proudly upon a very upright neck, above very upright shoulders, a figure of perfect proportions and a face with clear-cut, classical features. Everything about Hélène was clear-cut, the straight direct look of her eyes, the clear, precise enunciation of her words, her concise, never confused appreciation of things, situations and people. Her deportment in general was sure, correct, pleasantly ironical and somewhat fastidious. A great deal of care had been expended on her education, she spoke several languages fluently and was deeply read. Living often in Paris she moved about in literary and aristocratic circles and was a perfect *femme-du-monde*. Although vastly different from our

erratic and light-shy Maruka, they were great friends, and when in Roumania Hélène often came to our *clair-obscur* evening in Maruka's rooms.

Jean Chrissoveloni, Hélène's brother, an exceedingly clever young man, had married an English girl, a Miss Yovell; she also belonged to our circle and her gay, impulsive, uncalculating Anglo-Saxon nature was in charming contrast with her more sophisticated sister-in-law. Sybil, like her beautiful sister, Mrs. Bennett, was a magnificent specimen of humanity. Tall, fair, always on the go, gay, kind-hearted, impulsive, she had a splendid figure and a milk-white skin; she moved superbly and every inch of her was brilliantly alive and healthy. Her teeth were white and strong, her laugh catching, her eyes brown as mountain burns and there was a delicious tilt to her small and delicate nose. In fact Sybil was irresistible, one of those beings who according to the old song must have been born "on a sunshiny morning."

No one wore her clothes more perfectly than Sybil, there was an air of triumphant prosperity about her that was invigorating. Generous, artless, over-credulous, in spite of her worldly goods life was not always kind to Sybil, but when taken in or deceived her pain and indignation was that of a child and was expressed in so many words. Sybil was one of those who are "clean of spirit" and I loved her dearly.

But Sybil is now under the ground.

Nadèje Stirbey mostly lived in the country; she was seldom amongst us in Maruka's salon.

She was and is the perfect type of wife and mother, living for her family. I loved going to her house, and both her husband and her children were my friends. In her company the darker side of life fell away. There was something of a bird or a butterfly about Nadèje. She was always singing and gay, always busy, happy, for ever on the move, surrounded by loving attention, here, there and everywhere, in her house, her garden, her kitchen, with her children, her servants, her peasants; her hands were always full of some sort of work, painting, writing, embroidering,

gardening. She had no high ambitions, she was contented with her own world without searching for impossible improvements, nor was it her desire to climb giddy heights. A pleasant, welcoming hostess, a gay, care-free companion, she had the secret of putting from her all that could sadden and complicate her life, without striving for anything beyond her reach—Nadèje is one of the only completely happy women I ever met.

In great contrast to happy, care-free Nadèje, with her child's soul and simple, contented ways, was her much younger sister-in-law, Marthe Bibescu, who at the early age of sixteen had married Nadèje's brother, Georges Valentin Bibescu.

Born a Lahovari, Marthe was one of four sisters, her father, Jean Lahovari, being brother to Alexander and Jaques Lahovari whom I mentioned when speaking of the Conservative Ministers. Marthe's soul had come into the world already wise and weighted with knowledge. Even as a little girl Marthe was already grown up.

I knew her as a little girl during my first years in Roumania, for there was just ten years difference between us. I used to call her "Pony" in contrast to her elder sister Jeanne to whom I had given the less flattering name of "*Ane*"; and in those far-off days I, the fair young princess from Great Britain, was "Pony's" ideal.

From earliest childhood Marthe showed signs of beauty and always dreamed of "grandeurs." The great of this world, royal or otherwise, interested her beyond measure. Great names, great success, great talent, fabulous careers, all these things fascinated the little girl with the big brown eyes and eager, inquiring brain. I liked to have her with me, she was so interesting, so stimulating and the adoration she had for me was pleasant to my young vanity. I had a great name and two long rows of ancestors from the opposite sides of Europe looked down upon me; all this Marthe knew, knew it even better than I did, for Marthe, like all the Lahovaris, was a real encyclopædia even at that early age. Her memory was remarkable, she never forgot or missed anything; even when she was a child I had the

feeling that I was with a soul much older than mine. There was nothing naïve about "Pony," her eyes were watchful, her brain ever at work.

The pretty little girl grew into an exceedingly attractive woman, almost into a beauty in fact ; with her large, short-sighted eyes, and queer, large mouth, there was something Circe-like about her fascination. "Character is destiny." Marthe meant to advance and succeed, and this she did. She attracted into her life those things of which she dreamed. She became acquainted with those whose names are foremost in our striving, changing world of to-day. Little by little she grouped people of talent and interest around her. Her keen mind is open to every social advantage, she entertains royalty, diplomats, politicians, artists, writers, scientists and aristocrats. She travels in many lands and her hosts are always amongst the most select and renowned, and as when she was a little girl and I called her "Pony," her ears and her eyes are wide open, she absorbs and never forgets anything she sees and hears. And Marthe has become a much-talked-of and appreciated writer, a writer admired by the most critical critics. Her French is faultless, her style delicately perfect ; the pictures she evokes are rich and full of poetry, her books are wise and deeply studied and every sentence is polished like a precious stone.

Nothing is lost to her busy brain, her every quotation shows deep thought, and incredible erudition and an astonishing knowledge of each subject she treats ; nothing is left to chance or caprice.

All that is beautiful moves her, and she finds rare words in which to describe what she sees and hears ; it was this shared love of the beautiful which made of us close companions for many years.

We both loved gardening and flowers, loved planning quaint and original interiors ; we loved collecting old stones and discovering queer, unexplored corners, old churches, forsaken houses, and all those things so full of charm for which many have no eyes at all. We liked books and poetry and beautiful colours and the sound of bells in the distance ; yes, we had much in common, but as life advanced our roads gradually deviated, her ambition took another

direction, the same things were no more equally important to us both.

Thus does life occasionally play tricks with friendships.

Hélène Crețianu, later Hélène Moruzi, was quite another type. She loved country life, she loved riding and hunting, and all she did was done with energy and conviction and endless light good-humour. Slim, wiry, with delicious naturally waving hair, her brilliant eyes always looked amused and she emphasized all she said with expressive gestures of her hands. There was just a touch of boyish mischievousness about her which made her rather a handful for her first husband, who was a staid and rather solemn diplomat. She would never allow him to be as important as he felt himself to be; this *à la longue* was, of course, not very conducive to good understanding and she was much better suited to the elegant cavalry officer she married later.

In her youth, being much absent from the country, I saw less of her, in fact we were never much together; but a mutual feeling of sympathy bound us together whenever we met: it was a spontaneous friendship which does not lessen with the years.

Now Hélène Moruzi's wavy hair is turning grey. She manages her own estate with quite masculine efficiency, but her eyes have remained just as sparkling and life has not blighted her sense of fun; to-day, as in her early youth, she loves to laugh over her exploits which are now mostly amidst field and peasant, amidst her animals, her gardens, her flowers, vegetables, wheat and maize. Hélène Moruzi is a breezy, healthy, refreshing personality.

There were still other friends of different kinds and at different periods of my life such as Symky Lahovari, who later became my lady-in-waiting, Vidine Palady, who had so much to say on every subject and to-day is the principal leader of our feminist movement, the two pretty Ferikydi daughters, Irene and Anna, Hélène Odălescu and Letta Cantacuzène, but these were the principal women who surrounded me when, towards 1907, King Carol began to

admit me as a personality he had not only learnt to like but whom, in a way, he began to appreciate. The education he submitted me to was unyielding, but with the years came on my part a better understanding of his "whys and wherefores" and a real admiration for his qualities as man and king, and on his, a gradual realization that I could be trusted if not too severely coerced. I had to be ridden with a light rein, a too severe curb made me either rear or pull. There was also this, that he was getting old and felt at last a certain pleasure in being surrounded by young and pleasant faces. My group of friends was a little different from those who sat year in year out at Aunty's feet. We were more out-of-door, fresh-air people, and he instinctively felt a breeziness in this change of atmosphere introduced by his irrepressible niece.

His distrust of me and my methods was subsiding; he saw that I was beginning to understand what was expected of me, especially he realized how year by year I was learning to love the country more profoundly. He sensed in me the making of a patriot, one who could be fired by the needs and aspirations of a people.

I had neither the patience nor the discipline to do exactly as he and the old Queen had done before me, I was of my time as they had been of theirs; besides, there was the fundamental difference of race and upbringing, but for all my love of independence, I had a strong sense of duty and upon this Uncle knew he could finally count even if he could not obtain obedience to every rule.

The strongest link of all was our children; he loved them dearly and found for them all the indulgence he had never found for us.

The choice of friends is supposed to be a revelation of character: *dis-moi qui tu hantes, et je te dirai qui tu es*. My friends were very dissimilar, I had, so to say, a friend for every mood. This was once commented upon by a lady not devoid of jealousy in a none too kindly way.

I was joking with Maruka, allowing her to propound one of her newest theories. (Maruka was always riding some hobby-horse and we, her adherents, were always having earnestly to discuss her most recent opinions upon this, that

or the next thing. Maruka loved debating, and we enjoyed her queer arguments.)

The morose lady, listening to our animated discussion, looked on with disapproval; she disliked my versatility of spirit, and the fun I could derive out of Maruka's glorious nonsense was one of her chief annoyances. Being a distant relation of my friend, she considered herself justified in voicing her pent-up irritation in these none too amiable words: "If I were you, my dear Maruka, I would cease being so absurd; have you not yet discovered that the Princess is merely using you, all of you, as a set of puppets, pulling the strings of each of you in turn, for her own amusement?"

This was certainly a very ungracious thing to say, slighting to my friend and scathing to me. Luckily Maruka was equal to the occasion; she broke into one of her most irresistible peals of laughter: "Puppets are we? I never particularly saw myself in that light, but if it is so, I am only too pleased to be one of the Princess's puppets, because I thoroughly enjoy it." *Pantin* was the exact word the disapproving lady used.

No, the accusation was entirely unjustified; I never looked upon my friends as "puppets," each was dear and precious to me in her own way. I was many-sided, no doubt, my interests were varied and manifold, and because I cared for poetry and could read Nietzsche and listen to good music, it did not mean that I could not find delight in gardening or be interested in Paris fashions, or in the cooking of a good cake, or in how many guns an artillery regiment needed, or what the Emperor of China wore for his coronation.

I did not profess to be an authority on any subject, not even on the upbringing of children or how a princess should enter a room; I had no theories and never mixed up in other people's affairs, nor pressed my opinion upon them. What I had was a keen brain, a quick perception and an ever alive and joyful interest in all things; nothing was beneath my attention. The little man's joys and pains were as real to me as the big statesman's scheme. My sympathy was quickly awakened, I was "all there" on every occa-



sion. Because I could understand a mother's delight over her first-born and could share her ecstasy, did not prevent my reading a serious book, or laughing at a funny joke, being interested in the way a bridge was built, never hindered my enjoying a good gallop or the excitement of a fast motor, nor the climbing of a mountain, nor the designing of a new room, nor listening to a dissertation upon architecture, navigation, or upon the right theory about horse-breeding. I had not a specially cultured brain, but it was receptive and above all my interest in life and humanity was paramount.

Because I felt at home in Maruka's fire-lit chamber it did not prevent my taking an interest in Nadège's children, in Hélène Moruzi's roses, in Hélène Soutzo's Paris successes, nor in Marthe's latest book. In my heart of hearts I may have preferred the company of one friend to another, but my joy to be with them in turns was genuine and whole-hearted.

Other friends will be spoken of later as my story advances along with the years.

## *Chapter IX*

### YEARS OF DISCOVERY

THE description of my friends has led me to a later date, but I must go back again to earlier times as there are still a few things to relate about these years of education when all was discovery.

We were allowed about six weeks' holiday a year and although there were occasional deviations from the rule, late summer or early autumn was the time assigned to us, especially in later years when everything became scheduled.

Whilst my father still lived we were allowed to visit my parents at Clarence House and thus I had once or twice the joy of a London season, a thing I had never had before my marriage, having married too young. And once, after the birth of my two eldest children, there was an unforgettable month spent at Osborne, in a cottage lent to us by Grandmamma Queen so that my children could enjoy the sea-air. Ducky, then Grand Duchess of Hesse, shared the cottage with me and she also had brought her baby girl and it was pure joy being once more in the cherished places of our childhood.

There was the beloved beach with its shells, there were the coastguards and their boat, the slippery pier with its many-coloured seaweed; there was the inebriating smell of the sun-warmed woods, of the honeysuckle and wild roses in the hedges and, above all, there was dear Grandmamma Queen at breakfast under her green-lined tent-parasol, surrounded by her Indians, Highlanders and admirably trained dogs. But to-day it was the turn of our children to be led up by white-clad nurses to kiss Her Majesty's hand.

Grandmamma took a kindly interest in this younger

generation, which had to appear daily at her breakfast and she was full of searching inquiries about our new homes and general behaviour.

The re-exploration of all we had loved as children was exquisite delight; the beach, the woods, the gardens, parks, farms, and the celebrated Swiss Cottage with its garden plots, its white lilies and the fascinating museum of all the things collected by Papa and his brothers—the blue butterflies, the flexible stone, the wonderful fan-shells.

We had a small one-horse pony trap which we used to drive in turns. Our married independence was still new to us and we enjoyed it like children on a holiday. The crunch of our carriage wheels off and on to the old ferry which led to Cowes had lost none of its charm, and we poked about in the little shops, looking for presents for the sailors who had now become our children's slaves as they had once been ours. We had swimming competitions and hunted for shells, and I remember that it was in one of Grandmamma's gardens that I first saw a Crimson Rambler in full bloom and how I stood before it as before a miracle—rambler roses were still rare in those days.

Ducky and I travelled back together, Grandmamma having lent us her yacht *H.M.S. Osborne* for the crossing, and we visited Middelburg in Holland, a picturesque old sea-town where all the girls and boys still wear their delightful costumes: real post-card children, almost too good to be true.

I stopped also at Darmstadt and spent several days at Wolfsgarten, the Grand Duke of Hesse's favourite country house, a wonderful place for riding, with sandy roads under endless stretches of woods.

The Darmstadt stables were renowned for their first-rate horses of every kind, from the light-footed Arab to the heavy Irish hunter. My sister was a splendid horsewoman and as the house was always full of guests there were many gay riding parties even by moonlight when the forest became ghost-like and strange, so that it was difficult to stick to the road.

Darmstadt was a great meeting-place for all the family

and also for other royalties less nearly related. The Tsar and his wife, Uncle Serge and Aunt Ella, came as often as they could, both the Tsarina and Aunt Ella being Ernie's sisters. I thoroughly enjoyed the life at Wolfsgarten: it was so full of fun and one met so many pleasant and interesting people. Above all I loved the riding and the beautiful flowers; the gardens were ablaze with the finest and rarest kinds. Ducky and I were always painting and drawing when we were not on horseback or amongst the flowers.

There was also another great joy; Ducky had a wonderful collection of white Lipizaner horses which were harnessed Hungarian-wise with attractive trappings. She drove four, sometimes five and even six-in-hand, and it was a lovely sight to see these light-footed, Arab-like horses come tripping through the forest.

Once, a few years later, I had to undergo a cure at Bad Schwalbach, a pretty but dull little place not far from Darmstadt. Here I had to take mud-baths, very efficacious, but I thoroughly disliked having to get into the slimy black stuff which had, into the bargain, an unpleasant odour. Always glad of any pretext to be together, Ducky obtained permission to visit me so as to lighten the ennui of the cure, and she brought with her her carriage and four white horses, much, of course, to the excitement of the "Kurgäste."

Every afternoon we took long drives through the pretty and wooded surroundings, generally getting out somewhere to make our tea. Thermos bottles had not yet been invented, so we boiled our tea over a spirit lamp. Faithful Gretchen was with us and we were a much more harmless trio than we were supposed to be. The four white horses attracted attention, so we were considered "fast." There was, however, nothing fast about us except the pace of our horses, which were fleet-footed and not heavy roadsters, but in those days whatever we did used to bring censure down upon our heads, we seemed to have the faculty of shocking our betters.

There was in particular a drive to the Frankfurt races (this was after the cure, and I was spending a few days at

Wolfsgarten before returning home) which has remained notorious.

We decided to go in grand style. At the head of the Darmstadt stables was a kindly and what we considered elderly gentleman, Herr von Riedesel. Delighted that my sister had such a passion for horses which gave special importance to his beautifully run stables, he was her most devoted slave and liked to turn out her carriages and riding-horses as perfectly as possible.

This was an excellent occasion to do his best, and to do honour to carriage and horses we decided to dress with as much *chic* as we could, but in our own special style which often met with disapproval. Our "get-up" was to be simple but striking, and I must describe it as later on, having been denounced by an aunt who wrote too often to our mother, we both of us in turn received severely reproving letters from our parent in which we were scolded for our "sinful love of dress," and our "affectation of wanting to look different from other princesses."

The offending garments consisted of plain white cloth skirts, which were then worn long and bell-shaped, and neat little tailor-made jackets in contrasting colours. Ducky's jacket was dull mauve and mine dead turquoise, an exquisite colour between green and blue. These jackets were perfectly cut and finished off with crystal buttons; our hats, shoes and gloves were white to match the skirts, and under our chins we had tied broad white tulle bows, as it was not yet the fashion to have a bare neck; these diaphanous bows were considered exceedingly "smart." But when we came down to the garden court-yard ready to climb into our high vehicle our attention was attracted by a pot of huge blue and mauve hydrangeas standing on the terrace steps, and suddenly the idea came to us that one of these showy globular flowers worn as a bouquet on the front of our jackets would give an extra *chic* touch to our neat turn-out. I suppose it was this unexpected finishing touch that was considered the most reprehensible.

It must be confessed that we *did* look very nice perched side by side on our high box, the dark and the fair sister, in our dull blue and mauve coats which were so pleasantly

harmonious, two neat grooms seated back to back with us, the four lovely horses speeding along, their attractive trap-pings swinging about as they ran. Ducky of course was driving.

We reaped all the success we had expected and when, later on, the storm of reproach whirled about our ears, we consoled ourselves by imagining that the real reason for the critical aunt's disapproval was that our *chic* simplicity had outshone the more heavy finery donned by others for the same occasion. Anyhow, no future disapproval could take from us the conviction that we had looked our best.

Our holidays, according to well-established and not-to-be-misunderstood royal desire, were to be spent between Sigmaringen, Coburg or later Tegernsee, where after our father's death, Mamma had bought herself a charming house, perched on a hill overlooking the lake. Any deviation from this rule or inclination towards any unexpected ideas of our own, any desire towards variation, was severely nipped in the bud.

Although I dearly loved my father-in-law I cannot say that I particularly cared for my visits to Sigmaringen; besides, as I was destined to live all the year round in my husband's family, when at last I had a holiday I naturally preferred being with my own people, and every day spent away from them seemed a waste of the precious and all too short six weeks granted us.

In the summer my parents-in-law went to the little country *Schloss* where we had spent our few "honey days," and towards autumn they would move over to Weinburg, an old house they possessed in Switzerland near Lake Constance. In both these places there used to be family gatherings and our children came together with their Hohenzollern cousins under the kindly eye of their grandfather whom they adored, as did everybody else.

But in spite of my fascinating father-in-law, the life at Krauchenwies was rather dull. The place was very pretty, a large park which adjoined a fir wood surrounding the several houses; there were gardens and meadows and plenty of wild flowers, but we were tormented by mosquitoes and

I remember my despair when they stung my precious Mignon when she was a fat and superbly pink-and-white baby of one year, making her peach-like cheeks look like a plum pudding!

My mother-in-law, more and more of a confirmed invalid, joined the family only for lunch. Being exceedingly fond of dress she insisted that this midday meal be turned into a smart affair, and although we were in the depths of the country we had to appear in sort of garden-party clothes at half-past twelve each day.

I have a somewhat unhappy remembrance of our overdressed little party, which included Hofmarschal, doctor, A.D.C. and elderly ladies-in-waiting, all gathered together for the classical game of skittles after lunch. I still have a vision of my mother-in-law in stiff, rustling silk, with strangely small and narrow bust upon over-large hips, weakly swinging the heavy wooden ball attached to a string. Her feet were too small for her weight so her gait was slow and faltering; her hands were beautiful but had the groping, somewhat uncertain movements of those who continually receive too much help, and are therefore unaccustomed to do things for themselves. I also see myself, slightly rebellious in periwinkle-coloured moiré, considering this festive attire unsuitable for a game of skittles, except perhaps in a Watteau picture.

I see my father-in-law, charming, conciliatory, amiable with everyone in turn, exceedingly polite even with his sons, eager to make a success of the gathering. I see my two brothers-in-law; William, jovial, fat, but without his wife, as they had agreed more or less to live apart; Carlo, long, thin, too fair and too well pleased with his own good looks and adored by his much superior wife, Josephine, who, alas, like her father the Count of Flanders, was almost stone-deaf. I see neat little *Täntchen*, who wore such high collars that they seemed to be strangling her. She was none too fond of her sister-in-law, Fürstin Antonia, and did not always spare her sarcasm, but she loved her nieces and was loved by them as was dear *Onkelchen* with his comfortable, drawling voice.

I see Nando very much on holiday with a too large

cigar in his mouth (in Germany everybody smoked too large cigars), Nando, spoilt by his mother, who hoped to make me jealous because of the attentions she showered upon him and Josephine, leaving me out in the cold.

Fürstin Antonia was a rather uncomfortable lady. No one except her husband, and in a vaguer way her sons, cared very much for her; she was an egoist and could be exceedingly irritating, but her artistic side and her great love of flowers made a bond between us which stood me in good stead, even when my feeling of irritation took the upper hand. Her narrow Catholicism was trying, and still more her continual belittling of her neighbour and praise of her own virtues. She was not a clever but a talented woman. She never, however, managed to make mischief between Josephine and myself, we were both too staunch and loyal to each other, though life did not bring us much together.

My closest friend in the Sigmaringen household was Frifri, a distant cousin of my husband's, the granddaughter of a great-aunt, a Teveggi by birth, an orphan whom my parents-in-law were bringing up: she later married Baron Geier, their A.D.C.

Frifri and I had much in common. Her Italian vivacity was most refreshing and when she was at Sigmaringen it made my stay much more amusing. We were a great deal together, we both loved poetry and art in general, we read the latest books; besides, her talk was animated and witty. Nando had a great affection for Frifri and we asked her to Roumania more than once. She also tried to ride, but this we called *la passion malheureuse* because she was mortally frightened on a horse and kept asking me what face her horse was making, as if according to his expression one could guess if he had good or bad intentions. Never before or after did anyone ever ask me what faces his horse was making!

Guests were continually coming to Sigmaringen, and once old Queen Carola of Saxony arrived for a few days, a kindly, exceeding religious old lady whose figure was somewhat out of drawing. The old Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Baden were also great friends of the



family and numerous other members of German royal houses.

As soon as I dared run away from Sigmaringen without offending Nando and his parents, I rushed off to Mamma and then only did my yearly holiday really begin. Before Mamma bought Sengerschloss, the house at Tegernsee, it was generally at the beloved Rosenau that we would meet, the Rosenau with its round tower and Gothic gables; the Rosenau with its cosy small rooms, its quaintly-painted walls, its discreet lamplight and familiar smell of straw matting; the Rosenau with its sound of the splashing fountain and of the old gardener raking the already too tidy paths; the Rosenau with its wide meadows, with its roses and green lawn before the house and Mamma sitting under the old maple tree. Yes, I loved every inch of the Rosenau.

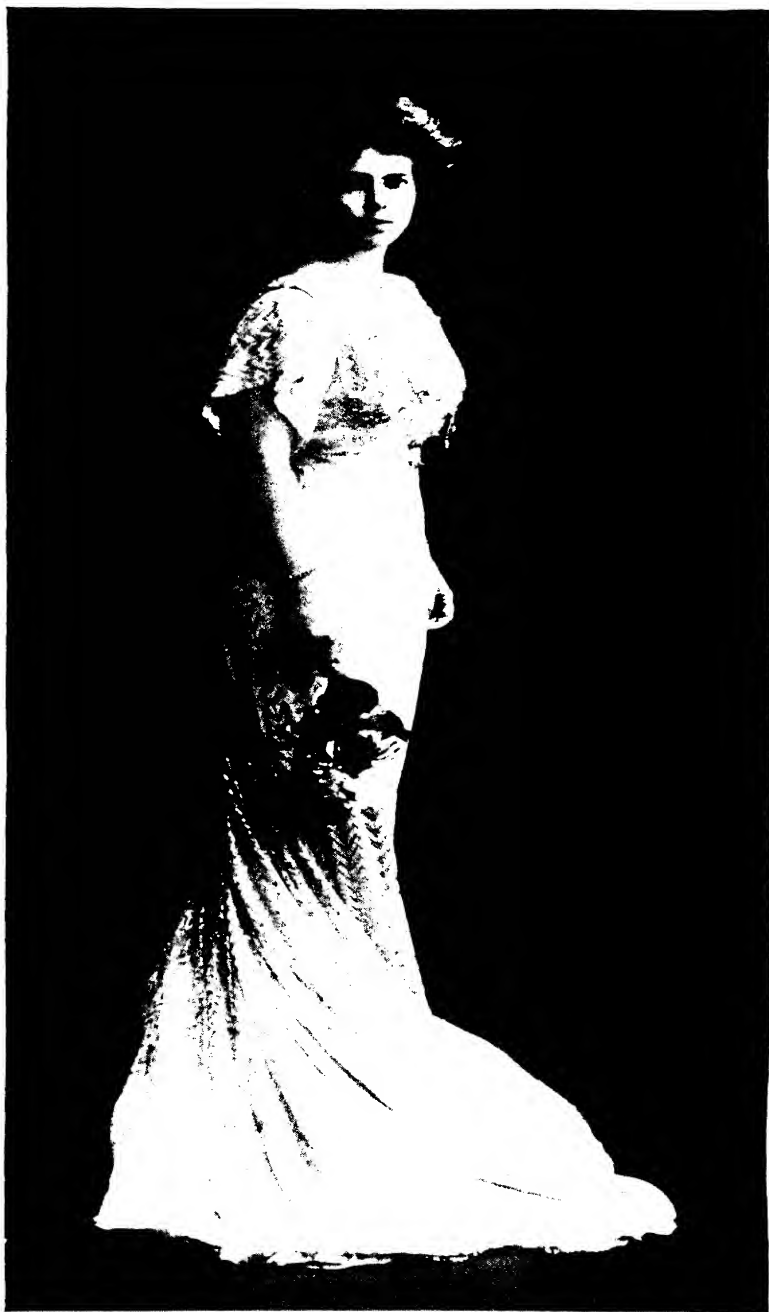
Once there was a visit to Reinhardsbrunn, near Gotha, and then to Oberhof, two shooting-places beloved of my father. Mamma, having to go to Russia, left me to keep house for Papa; I felt very proud, for being as a rule far away, this honour seldom fell to my share.

After my father's death of course many things changed. Alfred died before his father, so it was the son of the Duke of Albany, Papa's nephew, who became Duke of Coburg. Mamma then bought Tegernsee, and although my heart still clung to the Rosenau, the date of my holiday generally coincided with the season Mamma spent at Tegernsee.

Tegernsee had the great advantage of being near Munich, and being somewhat starved in all that concerned art, these holidays were occasions when I could drink my fill of music, exhibitions and picture galleries.

Munich is one of the few towns that are really delightful in summer; it is never too hot and its excellent exhibitions and manifold theatres attract many foreigners. It was always full of gay faces and happy people all intent upon artistic pleasures.

There was something special about my arrival at Munich for my yearly holiday. Mamma was usually already awaiting me at the old Russischer Hof, which suited her tastes, as she detested new and fashionable hotels. On the way



MY SISTER BEATRICE, CALLED "BABY."



to Tegernsee from the Rosenau she generally spent a few days at Munich, allowing her servants time to negotiate the change of residence. She, too, thoroughly enjoyed Munich with its picture exhibitions and theatres, and she also loved shopping and going to art dealers.

A delightful holiday feeling took possession of me the moment my feet touched the Munich pavement: there was a special thrill in stepping out of the hotel door as free as air, no one to protest or forbid, no one to control or object. And then to know that there was Mamma to return to, Mamma who liked you to have a good time and who took such a keen interest in all your exploits, Mamma who encouraged your activities and never wanted you to sit still. It was only occasionally that she joined in with our activities, but she liked to see us enjoy ourselves and be continually on the move. She used to speak of "Missy's agitations," but when I did not "agitate" she was exceedingly disappointed. Loss of time was unbearable to her. There was one thing that made her angry and that was when we were late for meals. The hours of lunch and dinner were sacred.

Of course there was always one or the other of my sisters there, especially Baby Bee, and it was with her that I most enjoyed the Wagner representations at the Prinzregententheater. We were both of us deep Wagner-lovers and the whole atmosphere of the Prinzregententheater had something special about it; it was almost like going to church. I liked sitting in the first row if possible, as near the stage as I could, so as to be in direct contact with the singers. The bewitching music rising out of the dark, almost beneath one's feet, filled me with a rapture only those who have felt it can appreciate. I confess to having a special weakness for the *Walküre* and declare that if Wagner had never written anything but "Wotan's Abschied" and the "Feuerzauber" he would still be a genius. But there were parts in each of his operas which transported me into another sphere, which thrilled through me, entirely detaching me from this world; such as "Waldweben" in *Siegfried*, the funeral march in *Götterdämmerung*, the passage of the Gods into Walhalla in *Rheingold* and the "Winterstürme" (the

love song in the first act of the *Walküre*), echoes of which steal again into the most tragic moments of the later acts. There is also the second act of *Tristan* which I have always declared I never really heard but only felt, to such a degree does it shudder through every part of your being. And the *Meistersinger* with its "Preislied," and *Parsifal* with its prodigious overture, its "Karfreitagszauber" and heavenly final "Erlösung." But in those days *Parsifal* was not given in Munich but exclusively in Bayreuth, and I was never able to get to Bayreuth, as I could not get away from home soon enough in the season.

The walking about between the acts was very amusing in the Prinzregententheater. As in Bayreuth, you met any number of acquaintances from many countries. It was the fashion to dress smartly for these representations and the long *entr'actes* became a real dress parade where everybody sauntered round and round the little garden, staring at each other with occasional amused or joyful exclamations of recognition.

I remember a certain white dress and willow green cloak I liked appearing in, a becoming attire which never passed unnoticed. Baby was a perfectly delightful companion, exceedingly witty and full of fun; we had a high time together, our holiday mood giving zest to the most trivial event.

Baby was extremely musical and was a greater authority on Wagner than I was and, later, when she married the Infante Alfonso of Orleans-Bourbon, they became passionate devotees of Bayreuth; there was not a note of the music nor a word of the libretto that they did not know by heart.

Ali, as we called her husband, was quite one of the most perfect human beings I have ever met. At first, my sister being a Protestant, there were great difficulties about their marriage and for a time he was not allowed to reappear in Spain, so they remained with Mamma, but that is a whole story of its own and cannot find place in these pages. They were a delightful and original couple, stimulating company, amusing, unconventional and always full of quaint principles and ideas. But she was still unmarried in those happy Prinzregententheater days.

The life at Tegernsee was very quiet, the place beautiful and a paradise for the children, and the long hours in the evening when we used to read with Mamma hours of profound content. The last time we all met at Tegernsee was in 1913, after my little Mircea's birth.

## *Chapter X*

### MORE CORONATIONS: EDWARD VII; GEORGE V

**H**AVING at the beginning of this volume described the Moscow Coronation I feel that I must also speak of King Edward's and King George's Coronations, at both of which we were present, officially deputed to represent our country.

The years have passed and in my mind these two coronations somewhat run into each other although ten years lay between them.

Just as magnificent in their way as those of Russia, there was, however, a soberness about the London festivities which contrasted with Moscow's more Oriental splendour. Here too there were unique traditions and ceremonies harking back to much older times ; there was a display of might, but it had not that touch of the fantastic which everything took on at Moscow.

Here the King and Queen drove in a golden coach just as beautiful as the Russian coaches ; the cream-coloured horses, with their superb trappings of red leather and that touch of lavender blue decorating their manes, were, I think, finer than the white horses harnessed to the two Empresses' carriages. The troops were smarter, if less picturesque, the men more handsome, the Indians a wonderful display, but although London had gone mad with enthusiasm there was about it all the sober aspect of complete civilization, also the soberness of the London setting, a dignified monochrome in spite of its thousand flags.

I love the way London hangs out her flags, right across the street from one side to another so that the royal processions seem to be driving under a ceiling of ever-moving rainbow colours.

And then Westminster Abbey, sombre for all the superabundance of its time-darkened Gothic ; half-tones—greys, blacks and browns—in place of Moscow's golden shrines. Sober also the chants, more angelic perhaps but less overwhelming than those stupendous Russian bass voices chanting without instrumental accompaniment, which have a way of troubling the soul and making the heart beat. The royal guests sat in the Gothic choir stalls, a perfect setting, framing each bejewelled personage, fitting them into their background. I too sat here, at my husband's side, and was fascinated by the solemn beauty, by the order and dignity of the different processions, the Peers of the Realm, the Princes and Princesses of the Royal House, the Prince of Wales, the high clergy and, finally, the King and Queen. The chants rose higher and higher like an angel chorus, filling the old building with hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

We were so placed that we could not see the whole of the ceremony, but this I need not describe as it is well enough known in its every detail. It passed before my gaze in a series of perfect pictures and through it all a feeling of well-established and undisputed might, representing the Nation's feeling, based upon a granite-like tenacity of tradition and respect. No tragedy lay beneath, no sense of fear or sacrifice. The Queens' faces were serene, almost unmoved, the thrones they were mounting were, if I can so express it, seats of peace.

Irresistibly the vision of the young Empress rose before me, standing rigidly upright, her golden robes flowing from her shoulders, her face flushed, her eyes tragic, her lips tightly set as though at bay.

Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary : two serene figures, imbued with all the dignity of Royalty, lovely faces of calm assurance ; their crowns, although weighted by a hundred gems, did not seem to oppress them, nor to be unduly heavy, there was an established security about these queens which made you feel glad for them, not afraid.

Perhaps I am too inclined to see a symbol in everything, the depths lying beneath the quiet surface, so that I cannot



remain purely descriptive; I seem to see more than the naked eye perceives.

Besides, so much has happened since.

But King Edward VII's Coronation had its moment of tragedy, illness having suddenly felled the monarch at the very hour of his greatest glory, so that the date of the ceremony had to be put off.

There was something powerfully dramatic about this event. Princes and envoys from all the four corners of the earth had gathered together to do honour to the man whose brow was to receive the symbol of earthly power, and at that very hour he could not be with us but had to lie down under the surgeon's knife. His life hung in the balance, and the festive flags had to be hauled down.

How well I can remember beautiful Queen Alexandra receiving the guests. I can still see the anxiety beneath her smile. We had not been told what was going on, and our eyes kept watching the door through which the King was to appear, Uncle Bertie, that welcoming, self-assured gentleman with his debonair air of royal good-fellowship.

It was Cousin Victoria, his daughter, who had always remained at home with her parents, who finally told me that "dear Papa was very ill." It was a terrible shock, it came without warning and had about it an almost theatrical suddenness. The situation was indeed dramatic, and it must have needed much tact to deal with it diplomatically, not to frighten people too much and to make those who had come to rejoice realize that there could be no rejoicing, anyhow not for awhile.

Beautiful Chesterfield House had been put at our disposal for the time of the festivities. I have no precise remembrance of how long we remained there, nor can I quite remember which of the entertainments took place in spite of the King's illness. I made no notes at that time, so the exact sequence of events has been forgotten.

Was it at this first, or at the second coronation, that the Duke and Duchess of Westminster gave a ball at Grosvenor House? I can no longer remember for certain, but what has remained vividly in my mind was the finished

perfection of that entertainment, typical of the way you were entertained in the great English houses in times of peace and plenty.

We had come from a gala representation at the Opera and were in our most festive attire. I was wearing a snow-white dress of some flowing material, a very long dress with a train, on my head a crown of diamonds. This dress was the cause of disaster, not to myself but to others. I was asked to dance, which I did in spite of the unsuitability of my gown, but soon had to give it up. Being of soft clinging material my dress had a way of wrapping itself round the legs of the other dancers thus bringing more than one to a fall ; amongst these was my cousin Sophie, the Crown Princess of Greece. Thereupon I quitted the floor, horrified at being the unwilling cause of such perturbation, and retreated to the dais arranged for the royal guests and became an onlooker. It was one of the most brilliant and elegant gatherings it was ever given me to witness.

In this ballroom, with its beautiful pictures looking down upon us, amongst them "The Blue Boy" then not yet gone to America, the very cream of London society had flocked together, including some of the most beautiful women in the world.

Foremost amongst these was Princess Daisy Pless, tall and magnificently English in the splendour of her pink-and-white bloom. Gold-clad, with a high diamond tiara on her honey-coloured hair, gay, smiling, kindly disposed towards all men, she was indeed a glittering figure, a perfect incarnation of those days of peace, wealth and general prosperity. Our hostess, Daisy's sister, was her dark counterpart, she also a tall, brilliantly effective woman, covered with jewels. But of the two I always considered Daisy the more lovely of Cornwallis West's daughters.

One of the sights which has especially remained imprinted on my mind was the exquisite supper-hall erected for the occasion, all in blue and decorated with silver plate and blue hydrangeas, no other flowers except an occasional tuft of white lilies to set off all that blue ; at a table the two sisters, Daisy and Sheila, the fair and the dark, all eyes

turning towards them, they so entirely fitted into the beautiful setting.

I came in late and took a seat at one of the tables, I no longer remember with whom; I only remember that the supper was to be informal, the ladies coming in with their partners and sitting down wheresoever they pleased. This enormous blue-and-silver, flower-filled room was a feast for the eye, complete harmony such as only the most perfect English taste and tradition could achieve: not a single false note, not a mistake either in colour, proportion or detail: rich but not ostentatious, consummate refinement. Perfectly liveried footmen with that stately deportment peculiar to English servants, every one of them picked out for their fine figures and good looks, prodigious flowers, exquisite china, glass and silver, clever lighting, flattering to the complexion; in the distance soft music.

Always an artist at heart, I sat there drinking in all this beauty rendered possible only by generations of civilization and wealth. Fate had taken me to a country where all was in the making, where everything meant effort, and here I was, come back to the land of my birth, to that beauty most kindred to my soul. There is a sort of peace in perfect attainment, especially when one has known struggle and the uncomfortable shabbiness of things not yet well established; this faultless achievement of beauty for me was *peace*. A feeling of absolute content and well-being stole over me, all else was set aside, even thought. This was perfection: no doubt it had meant much thought, effort also, but the effort was not felt, there was neither hustle, haste nor confusion; it was all as though it could not be otherwise, and therein lay that exquisite feeling of peace and content.

Thus at certain rare hours in my life has the artistic, epicurean side of my nature known absolute satisfaction, the sensation that every sense was saturated with an exquisite content and deep inner approval; and with it came always that delicious feeling of peace, the peace of achievement.

This blue and silver supper was one of the occasions; another was at Tsarskoye Selo, at a big dinner given by the

Emperor Nicolas II. I cannot therefore resist calling to life again this vision which I gratefully remember.

Here the setting was different. A festive chamber dating from the time of Catherine the Great, a masterpiece of the very best rococo period : walls of looking-glass in small squares, and over this shimmering background gilt and carved festoons all converging into a golden ceiling painted with delicate floral arabesques. The gold, mellowed by centuries, had taken on the tints of beech woods in autumn, the lighting was brilliant without being glaring, it was as though the light emanated, like sunshine, from the golden walls.

In this exquisite room was a number of round tables, one mass of gorgeous golden plate and in the centre of each a small garden of yellow tulips. Gathered round these tables a company of sumptuously dressed women, officers and officials ; a more glittering, glistening company could not be conceived. There at different tables sat the two Empresses and all the grand duchesses in their Russian court dress, richly tinted robes heavily embroidered with silver or gold, their crowns like haloes, their arms and necks a scintillating mass of diamonds and many coloured precious gems. Many were young and beautiful, and even all those past their first youth wore their overpowering finery with the ease of those born to imperial splendour. There sat also my giant uncles and cousins surrounded by a numerous following of generals, A.D.C.'s and high functionaries, every one in uniform, not to mention the diplomats, their wives and an endless train of court ladies, the reds, blues, greens, violets and yellows of their gowns forming a never-ending scale of colour thrown into splendid relief against the golden background.

My eyes sought the Emperor, Nicky, dear to us all. He was not one of the giants, but the gentleness of his expression made him infinitely sympathetic ; something seemed to melt in one's heart when one looked at him, at his soft hazel eyes, at his gentle lips, when one watched his quiet movements, listened to his soft, low-toned voice.

At each door stood huge niggers dressed in costumes such as are seen in old prints depicting ballets of the time of Louis XIV, with high, many-coloured ostrich plumes on

their heads. At a given sign these ebony-faced apparitions would throw open the doors to a never-ending procession of red-and-gold-liveried servants who streamed into the room bearing enormous dishes of silver and gold, laden with peacocks, swans and pheasants served up with their gorgeous plumes ; dishes so huge and heavy that one marvelled how a single man could carry such a weight. Fish, meat, venison, vegetables, ices, creams, tropical fruit ; wines, ruby red, golden, amber, topaz ; and all that was set before you was not only exquisitely served but deliciously tasty.

So as to give a last touch of luxurious perfection to this imperial banquet, ravishing music was played by the Tsar's private orchestra ; this, no ordinary military band, but each man a picked musician playing Tschaikovski, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Rachmaninov, Stravinski, also Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, Wagner, Strauss, Debussy, etc. Some declared that this was waste, that on such occasions no one listened to excellent music. But everything being so perfect I could but rejoice that this culminating touch was given to this feast, unforgettable because so consummate.

This was one of those occasions where I sat almost mute, overcome by perfect content, every sense satisfied, the eye, the ear, the tongue ; no flaw anywhere, and it all looked as though it could not be otherwise, no apparent effort ; it unfolded before one's gaze, a pageant of royalty at its supremest. This too was achievement ; it had in it the same satisfaction as when witnessing an absolutely flawless opera or theatrical representation, or listening in a cathedral to a grand organ, or seeing exquisite dancing, perfectly lighted, rhythm, sound, colour, setting. All that is absolutely perfect gives that feeling of peace. This is not a question of ethics, but of absolute physical content, a moment when all questioning is lulled, one no longer debates in one's mind why this should be, if it is right or wrong, sinful luxury, extravagant waste ; nothing exists but content. May those who have never experienced this misunderstand me if they choose.

This stupendous Imperial world is at an end ; I am not going either to criticize or defend that which was. I merely declare that it was beautiful, a feast for the eyes.

Our cynical times admit no more beauty, anyhow not in this form ; it now belongs to the past as completely as the Crusades or the *Minnesänger*. The central figures around which all this glory circled are no more ; their death was terrible, not to be thought of if one wants to sleep in peace. But they died still believing that they too were loved.

Other principles rule the world to-day : up to the present I have not perceived that they have made it any happier or more prosperous, but what I do perceive is that beauty is being murdered more and more every day. Is there "achievement" in this ? Perhaps ; but does it bring contentment ? Permitting myself for once a cynicism, I would like to say, No, not even the very material contentment of that horde of red-and-gold-clad footmen who consumed or carried back to their families the copious remains of their imperial master's feast.

*Mais tout passe. . . .*

The difference between English and Russian opulence was an interesting study. In Russia all was gorgeous beyond description, but there was always something Eastern about the luxury even in those houses where Western customs and manners had been introduced. One felt there was prodigality in all things, an uncalculating largeness, a certain underlying negligence, not to say waste. There was something generously haphazard about it, also a certain primitiveness. It was like a rapid growth, whilst everything in England seemed to be based upon solid habit become adamant by tradition and upheld by unshakable convictions.

Nothing, for instance, is more irreproachably perfect in every detail than the King of England's court and household, a sort of staid luxury without ostentation, a placid, aristocratic ease and opulence which has nothing showy about it. Everything is run on silent wheels that have been perfectly greased ; everything fits in, there are no spaces between, no lapses, no false note. From the polite, handsome and superlatively groomed gentleman-in-waiting who receives you in the hall, to the magnificently solemn and yet welcoming footman who walks before you down the corridor, everything pleases the eye, satisfies one's

fastidiousness. When I call up before my mind the royal English abodes I always have the vision of softly carpeted, picture-hung corridors, with a silent-footed servant walking ahead of you, discreetly impersonal and yet belonging to the whole; I have the feeling of mounting shallow-stepped stairs leading towards rooms as perfectly "groomed" as were the horses of the royal carriage which brought you up to the front door, as perfectly groomed also as the tall sentry presenting arms before the gates. His uniform was better cut than any uniform in any other country, he was slimmer, straighter, cleaner, more perfectly turned out. Everything the eye perceives seems to have just been taken out of a band-box, fresh from the laundry, beautifully ironed, uncrumpled, unsoiled.

Those who live in England are so accustomed to this well-established tidiness and sober sumptuousness that it seems natural, as though it could not be otherwise, but those who, having wandered far from the fold to more Eastern lands, when returning to their old environment marvel at the order achieved by generations of tidiness which has finally become a national quality.

Not only the court but all the great houses of England have this same stamp upon them of discreet but fundamental luxury, an effortless, superlatively organized and undiscussed perfection which astonishes no one except the traveller who has come from a "far land."

I have not been to England for several years; I know the world is changing fast, but I hope that this perfection is not passing away with so much else.

When returning after many years' absence to these haunts of my childhood and earliest youth, I am filled with a feeling of such profound and tremendous inner satisfaction that it is as though something which had been knotted up inside me and which had always been aching, had suddenly been untied and I was sinking back luxuriously into what was mine and still fundamentally belongs to that real "me" which comes to life again only when touching my own soil. And in that satisfaction which was both joy and pain there lay also the eternal and unappeased nostalgia for that from which I had been torn.







ELISABETHA IN HER TWELFTH YEAR.

The long-drawn-out effort to overcome difficulties, to live as harmoniously and bravely as possible where Fate had placed me, had lulled this nostalgia. It had to be throttled, done away with, so as to find the daily courage to succeed, so as to become constructive, banishing regret as a weakness never to be indulged in. There must be no looking back, only a straining forwards, relentlessly, without end.

But the sensation of coming home, to what is no more "home," is both wonderful and unbearable ; it seems to tear apart your very heartstrings, to fill you to the very brim with all the tears you never dared weep, with all the world-wide *Sehnsucht* you never dared express.

I remember once how this nostalgia overwhelmed me like a great wave whilst walking with Queen Alexandra over the lawns of Sandringham. The sward underfoot was soft, dense emerald-green ; against a background of firs grew great clumps of azaleas and rhododendrons. I was advancing in a sort of dream ; this was England, *my* country, this had all been mine once. Now it was mine no more, I was almost a stranger and yet not a stranger, for my roots had really remained here in this English soil. An immense desire came over me to fall down on the ground and kiss this green, green grass, to roll on it, to feel it, possess it, make it mine once more. It was excruciating pain, *Sehnsucht*—there is no other word which properly expresses it—it was the longing of the outcast towards that which he had denied, from which he himself had shut himself out.

My aunt looked at me and took my hand. "You love it?" was all she said. "Yes, I love it, and it hurts to love quite so hard. . . ." *Sehnsucht !*

*Sehnsucht !* I remember a spring spent at Esher in a wee cottage rented by my sister, the Infanta Beatrice, who was bringing up her boys in England. This was at a much later date, after the War, but it fits into the chapter *Sehnsucht*, so I mention it here. It was the first spring I had spent in England since I was a child. I had about three weeks' holiday at my disposal and lived every hour of it with an intensity difficult to describe. I shall never belong to the indifferent,

even if I get very old I feel that my emotions will be strong ; this also is a characteristic, I believe, of the era we have put behind us, but I am as I am.

My sister had given me a small room overlooking the garden, a room with a sloping roof, a real English cottage room ; I dearly loved this room and the big bowls of flowers I filled daily kept it exquisitely fragrant.

When I opened my window to the keen spring air, listening to the birds or even to the rain, I felt like a convalescent breathing in health and new life. I was aware that this could not last, the days would drop too quickly into Eternity, but I meant to grasp every second, not a minute was to be wasted.

Beyond the gardens lay the woods full of blue-bells, an azure carpet such as England alone can offer ; blue-bells and primroses, and in every tree birds building their nests, filling the air with their calls, their songs. I had known all this as a child forty years ago ; I had never possessed it since those far-off days, and yet it was suddenly as though nothing that had happened between had ever counted, nothing ever . . . except this English spring.

We can become patriots elsewhere, we can toil, love, adopt, do our share there where it has pleased God to place us ; but when born to a soil, more especially to English soil, nothing can ever unbind that link, and the roots which have thirsted elsewhere immediately go deep down and find there the nourishment most kindred to our being.

Every line, every colour, every sound, every smell was just what I had always unconsciously been yearning for, the instantaneous, complete, inner satisfaction was ample proof of this. It was coming home to what I had always missed.

Then there was the English breakfast, the familiar dishes, the jam, the Devonshire cream, the scones, the cakes, the fat double loaf of heavy white bread. And the honeysuckle-encircled window opened straight out on to the lawn, a real English lawn, intensely green, smooth, dense, soft under-foot ; on to large tufts of light yellow violas in the enclosed garden, the herbaceous border breaking into bloom, and all those birds calling to me from the blue-carpeted woods. Even the English dampness of which so many complain felt

strongly fraternal, refreshing, to one who lives in a land of dust.

It was as though I must hurry to grasp it all, absorb it into my very veins ; the days would pass and then it would slip from me again irrevocably, for ever. These places would know me no more, it was only I who knew them ; now officially I belonged elsewhere.



# *Part Four*

1906-1914



## *Chapter XI*

### TO GERMANY AND RUSSIA

**O**NCE during our yearly autumn vacation (it was, if I remember rightly, in 1906) I paid a visit to Prince and Princess Pless at Fürstenstein, a magnificent palatial dwelling they owned in Silesia.

Here Daisy had introduced the English fashion of house-parties. Their huge castle was always full, they entertained lavishly with a grand indifference to cost, almost fantastic to look back upon from these days of dearth.

I cannot well remember how I came to accept this invitation, which was quite outside my usual round, belonging most certainly to those things Uncle Carol tabooed. I suppose I simply went there without asking permission, which would probably have been refused. I went together with my sister Hohenlohe, and our Cousin Sophie, already Crown Princess of Greece.

Daisy had the vaguest idea about time; she kept impossible hours and was always the last to appear for meals, to the despair of her formal and correct German husband, who tried to invent plausible excuses for her unpunctuality.

Everybody could do as they would at Fürstenstein, everything was at the disposal of the guests, but our lovely hostess had every intention of having a good time herself, so the party split up into groups according to their different tastes. The grounds in themselves were magnificent and the castle so huge that it could hardly be explored.

Prince Pless ran a huge stable of fine horses and Daisy and I rode out together several times. The first day I was given a fine chestnut who began by rearing straight up on end. The way I managed to handle my mount on this occasion established me in the eyes of all as a good rider. Daisy was herself an excellent horsewoman and her husband



also rode well. Followed by several Englishmen, including Sir Ian Hamilton, we rode out far to a field in search of Kaiser Wilhelm's splendid troops concentrated that autumn in the neighbourhood of Breslau for the annual *Kaiser-manöver*.

After the sumptuous evening meal there was generally dancing, and in between the dances we would saunter about the beautiful terraces overlooking a deep wooded valley, for Fürstenstein lies superbly situated on a hill.

One evening I specially remember, my vanity having reaped a great success. I was clad in a pale pink, silver-bordered gown cut according to Greek lines and on my fair hair I wore a classically plain round wreath of roses, a form of head-dress which suited my type of face. I was conscious, as one occasionally is, of looking my best, and this in itself is stimulating. There was amongst the guests an American who was an excellent dancer, and we were asked to give a demonstration of the "valse-boston," then the great fashion.

My partner and I had the floor to ourselves and we danced as one can only dance when one's pace is in perfect accord. I was filled with that special exhilaration which comes from the consciousness of doing a thing well and that an appreciative audience is looking on. I had the feeling of swimming or flying, and my silver-bordered dress followed our movements in graceful curves. I knew that all eyes were upon me and I confess having enjoyed to the full this small triumph so agreeably flattering to my self-esteem. I have had my share of success in life, but certain occasions stand out more clearly than others. Being rarely *dans le monde où l'on s'amuse* I was not in the least *blasée*, all good things came to me with a freshness not to be conceived by those who live in a round of pleasure all the year through.

The grand manœuvres were to end with a huge parade at Breslau, and Daisy had specially begged me and my sister to remain so that we could drive together to witness this fine display of troops. Owing to the Kaiser's presence the town was all agog with pleasurable excitement.

The Pless carriages were renowned for their magnificence, which gave them a regal air. Daisy had decided

that we should drive in great state, have in fact our own private little procession and persuaded me to don my most becoming attire. I remember my long, plum-coloured velvet cloak and the wee golden toque with a white paradise plume sweeping down over one ear. Daisy had a way of enveloping herself in tulle which gave her a diaphanous appearance, adding greatly to the effect she made wherever she showed herself. Delighted with our "get-up," I can still hear Daisy declaring we were going to outshine the Emperor in all his glory.

Our turn-out was certainly showy enough to satisfy any public; high carriages slung on soft springs, rubber-tired wheels, four magnificent horses, we two fair young women all smiles in our festive attire and opposite us Prince Pless in brilliant uniform.

Much has been related about Kaiser Wilhelm's parades. They certainly were a magnificent show, unique of their kind, an imposing display of power and stupendous organization. The different regiments used to pass like one man and the much ridiculed goose-step was an added proof of superlative training. When the men pointed their toes, every one of them exactly at the same height, it was a unique sight. The regiments advanced one behind the other like moving walls, not an inch out of place, and every manœuvre was carried out with miraculous, unbelievable precision. The uniforms, except those of the cavalry regiments, were not showy, but they were perfectly cut and certainly "uniform" beyond the dream of imagination.

The most thrilling moment was when the Kaiser in all his glory appeared on the scene on a white, occasionally even on a piebald horse, a long train of brilliant uniforms in his wake.

Well to the fore, bolt upright, the ends of his aggressive moustache pointing to the skies, field-marshal's staff in hand, he was every inch the picture of a dominator, sure of his power, revelling in his dignity, so that instinctively you understood, even sympathized with the proud triumph which swept through him when he surveyed his splendid troops.

Looking back to-day from his cramped place of exile, I

think he must still say to himself : " Indeed my troops were a goodly sight " ; and they were, no one will be able to deny this fact, and I for one am pleased that I witnessed that Breslau parade.

The Empress generally accompanied him, riding a little to the rear of the Lord and Master. Mounted on a tall black horse she wore a white uniform and a white tricorn hat.

Some used to scoff and try to turn her into ridicule, but I always admired the patient courage with which this devoted woman carried out her husband's every order ; there was a brave abnegation about it which is not given to every woman. I do not think she always enjoyed all the racket and fatigue, but the characteristic smile never faded from her lips.

That same evening in Breslau all the regimental bands had gathered together before the window of the large hotel where the Emperor and his followers were banqueting, for a royal tattoo.

So that their guests should also enjoy this unique sight, our hosts had taken a room in the upper story of the same hotel. I remember leaning out of the window wrapped in a wide mantle of red cloth, colour of my Roşiori regiment. Daisy's fair head was close to mine, my sister was on my other side, we were very gay and enjoyed ourselves much more than the exalted party on the terrace below.

Many of these, including the Crown Prince and some of his brothers, Prince Max Fürstenberg and others, came up to greet us, but Cousin William, for some inexplicable reason, found it good to ignore us. I but rarely came from far Roumania and it would have been natural enough to send us a sign of recognition, but this he did not do, which was considered ungracious. But I laughed ; in those days everything amused me, it would have needed more than the Kaiser's indifference to damp my spirits. I did hear those around me murmur, but I would not join in with their criticisms, life was too short and too full to take offence at the small negligences of our very royal cousin !

There are not many other interesting visits abroad to

describe, as these were few and far between. Once we were allowed to go to Russia in 1908 for the marriage of my cousin Marie, only daughter of Uncle Paul, and once in 1910 to Berlin for the Emperor's birthday.

In Petersburg we lived in the palace of Uncle Vladimir and Aunt Miechen, an imperial couple who played a preponderant part in the Russian capital.

The Emperor Nicolas II and his wife had almost entirely abandoned the Winter Palace, and they lived exclusively at Tsarskoye, shut away from the rest of the world. A happy family life no doubt, but their exclusiveness was little conducive towards that fine, loyal unity which had always been traditional in the Russian Imperial Family during the two former reigns and which had constituted its great power. Up to the present the family had been an undivided block with the Emperor as pivot ; on all occasions it came together like one man to stand round its sovereign, thus strongly upholding his authority. Too self-centred, too exclusively interested in their own children, Nicky and Alix neglected their imperial relations, thereby undermining their trust and loyalty, also their love.

It is a great mistake for a sovereign to allow the family feeling to fall to pieces, he is much stronger with his family than without ; an amiable, affectionate attitude towards the older as well as the younger generation holds them together and uproots any imagined or real reasons for complaint or discontent. The moment he allows his family through neglect or injustice on his side, to split up into parties or clans, the seeds of discord and sedition have been sown, and this is fatal in the hour of danger when he may find himself alone, abandoned, as he abandoned those formerly only too ready to see in him the supreme head.

Uncle Vladimir was the most erudite of Mamma's brothers. He was a real scholar ; history being his special hobby, there was not a name, date or event he did not know by heart, and he was most interesting to talk to : he was also heart and soul a soldier.

Genial, humorous, with a ringing voice, he liked to entertain the many guests with whom his very worldly wife

filled his house. Like all my Russian uncles he could be uncomfortably outspoken and his voice being unusually sonorous and carrying, his remarks could occasionally be disconcerting, but this was the only thing about him in the least intimidating. Uncle Vladimir was the most kindly gentleman in every way.

Aunt Miechen, an exceptionally charming and intelligent lady, was also ambitious and it was not without a certain satisfaction that by force of circumstance she became the social centre of Petersburg. It must be admitted that she was an incomparably amiable hostess and knew to perfection how to receive all manner of men.

All through life she had been cherished, adulated, spoiled. She could spend what she would, every luxury, every comfort, every honour, every advantage were hers and she was one of the best-dressed women of her time: her clothes were superlatively smart and she had the great art of knowing exactly what to wear for each occasion; she never made a mistake. An atmosphere of unlimited prosperity emanated from her, she was the undisputed centre of her world, her very aspect invited attention; one of life's most spoilt children, she seemed to expect everyone who approached her to continue the spoiling, which they generally did, and yet it was she who appeared to be dispensing favours. There was great art in this.

Her house was certainly a most pleasant one for a short stay, as her hospitality was unlimited, and all the most important and interesting people came together in her salon. Here she reigned supreme; ministers, generals, foreign ambassadors, intellectuals even, bowed before her charm if not before her wit, for in reality she was less intelligent than was generally believed, but she had *la manière* and this counted more than anything else. We got on wonderfully together and she was exceedingly kind to my husband; she talked German with him and understood, with her perfect tact, how to help him overcome his timidity so that he felt comfortably at home in her company.

A series of festivities followed the wedding—balls, receptions, parties, lunches and dinners; we met many people and had a gay time, but unfortunately I was not up

to the mark as I was expecting my fifth child and was just in the months when one feels most unwell.

Russians have a way of making you feel extraordinarily welcome ; there was something fiery and impulsive, especially about the men, old or young, which made everything worth while. Wherever we went I had the pleasant sensation of being a favourite, almost as though I had been impatiently awaited and had at last come to those who had always considered me one of their own, a lamb gone astray and come back to the fold. It is difficult to resist this sort of kindness, it invites response ; in those days in Russia individuality played a great part : you were not supposed to be cut down to one particular pattern, there was a place for everyone and women were not set aside. I felt very happy and appreciated in Petersburg.

The contrast between the chief courts of Europe in pre-war days was an interesting study : London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin.

London, sober, dignified, supremely aristocratic in the highest sense of the word. Of course each sovereign gave a special tone to his time ; Queen Victoria, King Edward, King George—but through all three reigns ran a magnificent, sober dignity, even in King Edward's time when the English court was the least exclusive.

Vienna, all etiquette and ancient tradition, stiff, unbending, no place for the low-born, and running through it all the spirit of Catholicism, tyrannical, narrow, inflexible. But Vienna is itself a gay, sympathetic, brilliant centre.

St. Petersburg, gorgeous, lavishly welcoming, generous and hugely wasteful, limitless hospitality, but with an under-current of mystery not unmixed with anxiety. Here was wealth unlimited, power in the most absolute form but with something of apprehension, something a little dark lying beneath the dazzling exterior.

And finally Berlin, so to say the *nouveau riche*, the up-start, amongst the Great Powers and their courts. Great military display, magnificent order and discipline, a feeling of young strength but a little too new, too big, too loud. I am of course speaking of William II's reign. William I

had been a very quiet and sober gentleman, and the Emperor Frederick's reign was but a light that went out.

William II was high-spirited, many-sided, caring for all things at once. Having come to the throne when very young he was naturally fascinated by the glittering, showy side of royalty. He was still boy enough to enjoy the display, the uniforms, the decorations, the music, the noisy and gaudy rituals. He saw himself the central figure of a tremendous and armed show, and having histrionic ability and plenty of self-assurance it was not unnatural that he should have enjoyed the part he was called upon to play. He was young, impulsive, had the whole of life before him; besides, is not each man born with his own particular nature? Some are timid, retiring, horrified at the thought of being in the limelight. Others, on the contrary, like to be the central figure; a natural exuberance emanates from them, they like being first, like being acclaimed, are not afraid of responsibilities; they want to be listened to, to talk loudest and, sure of their own opinion, sure of their rights, they are impatient against contradiction and particularly resent every warning.

Such was William. Belonging myself to the rash and spontaneous, to the unafraid, there are certain things I understand in my cousin. He believed in his right to rule, decide, dominate, he believed also in the approval of his people. He believed himself to be, perhaps he was, the ruler they desired. He felt upheld, appreciated, the young monarch of a young and vigorous people; power was sweet and success went like wine to his head.

If he had been successful up to the very end his name would have remained that of a great emperor. He was finally beaten and the beaten are put aside, done away with, and it is only their faults that are remembered, not their virtues.

The Kaiser had certainly something about him which made him unsympathetic to his family. He was never a favourite, he was not very careful about other people's feelings, he was too sure of himself, too overbearing. There was really no modesty about him, not even at moments when it would have been elegant to be less assertive; this often

did him harm and there were few of us who did not resent the rough, offhand manner with which he liked to treat us, as though we were not really worthy of his attention. But he *was* a personality, often an aggressive one, I admit, but not to be overlooked.

My husband had attended more than one Kaiser's *Geburts-tag*, but this was the first time we went together. I had never in fact been back to William's house since 1892, the year of our engagement, and this was in 1910, if I rightly remember, and I was already mother of five children.

Nando was glad of every opportunity for going to Berlin or Potsdam. The atmosphere had remained congenial to him and here he met many old friends and military comrades; besides, one of his brothers was serving in Potsdam in the 1st Guard regiment and the other as a lancer in Berlin.

The exact opposite to the Kaiser, as timid as the other was assertive, as modest as William was flashy, my husband had nevertheless retained a loyal feeling towards his former military chief and *chef de famille*; he was never one of his disparagers and was always ready to take up the cudgels in his defence, although William paid him but very scant attention.

We were, of course, officially received and I was witness of the perfect order reigning supreme at the Prussian court. Everything was beautifully done and staged with a great feeling for solemn display.

Of the fine apartment put at our disposal in the *Schloss* I particularly remember my bedroom, an exquisite blue and gold rococo chamber which had once belonged to Frederick the Great. Over the bed hung his portrait of the time. I was also delighted with the magnificent amaryllis grouped in gorgeous red masses in my salon.

Augusta Victoria ushered me into this room with her somewhat formal affability. There was nothing really hearty about her, she could never put off that attitude of stereotyped graciousness which too much resembled condescension to be quite pleasant. I have, however, retained one more familiar remembrance of this somewhat over-monumental, over-formal lady which I like to think back upon. "Dona" was



at her best amongst her sons, then a fine set of promising young men ; in their company she lost some of her stiffness and of that shallow amiability which prevented any warmer intercourse. It was after a family lunch and my young cousins were crowding round me, pleased to have amongst them a relation they so seldom saw. I was dressed in a white cloth Redfern gown, very smart and Parisian, and had had the fancy of wearing orange shoes and stockings to add to the *chic* of my attire. The cousins were so delighted with this quaint finishing touch that they insisted on their mother coming to look at it, and I remember having to put my toes on a sofa and pull up a few inches of my long sweeping skirt to show off my orange finery. The Empress was somewhat taken aback by this unconventional foot-gear, but carried away by the general gaiety she for a moment forgot to be condescending, and we all laughed heartily ; that was the only time I remember seeing her really natural, so to say off her guard and not acting.

My young cousins were extremely amiable and made me, the rare guest, feel pleasantly welcome. I became friends with them all and they vied with each other in trying to give me pleasure.

A very smart *soirée* was offered us by the Crown Prince, who had in the previous year been on a visit to Bucarest, where his perfect manners and extreme amiability had left an excellent impression. Cecile, his wife, was one of the most charming princesses of her day. Tall, willowy, with wide-open eyes set rather far apart, she had a large but unattractive mouth. Her smile was captivating, her manner easy without any constraint : she received her many guests with perfect grace, cleverly seconded by William, who was fond of receiving smart and pretty ladies and who grouped them gladly round his table.

William, being a keen rider, took great care of his figure, which was slim, tall, upright ; never might a pound be added to his weight. His uniforms were cut to the last degree of perfection. His boots were as shiny as mirrors and his sword was unusually high !

We supped at small tables covered with beautiful flowers, and several younger Roumanian ladies had for this festive

occasion followed me to Berlin, William having made ravages amongst "the beauties of Bucarest." Susceptible to feminine charm, there were especially a pair of very large, velvety eyes which were supposed not to have left him quite indifferent. These ladies had been invited to the royal board. I was much amused at the many little by-plays and thoroughly enjoyed my evening. Daisy Pless was also amongst the guests, gorgeous as ever in her clouds of tulle; she always attracted all eyes, the pink and white radiance of her English beauty could never be overlooked.

We also had a ball at the house of Eitel Friedrich, the Emperor's second son, and a lunch with August Wilhelm, whose only child was my godson. Eitel Friedrich's wife was very intelligent; I liked her, although in general she was much less popular than the Crown Princess, being somewhat short of speech and not really fond of society. He was the most friendly of princes, over-stout but kind and jovial, and we had a certain instinctive sympathy for each other.

The ceremonies for the Emperor's birthday were brilliant and beautifully organized, and the military splendour with which the Kaiser surrounded his every movement was always well staged and impressive.

I remember sitting beside him during a gala representation. I was dressed in a gown of silver sequins and William, turning to me in his brusque rather challenging way, asked me if I imagined I was Lohengrin or the Lorelei. I was always perfectly able to hold my own with him, but must admit that he roused in me a certain pugnacity which inclined me to answer him in his own way. The male attitude was predominant in this self-assertive sovereign: he could be amiable when he wanted, but made show, towards ladies in general and the women of his family in particular, of a certain abrupt contempt which was partly put on but which made me feel belligerent; all conversation with him was like crossing swords.

For one of the State dinners I was paired off with the old Duke of Saxe-Weimar, an ancient gentleman celebrated for his conventional and old-fashioned amiability, ever ready to pay a compliment or to pronounce some ceremonious platitude. He had a disconcerting way of smacking his lips and

leaving his mouth open as though snapping in air. Turning towards me he declared that he could at once read upon my charming countenance that I never read novels. My love of truth made me protest, which evidently caused me to go down in his estimation : I suppose he considered novel reading a sign of frivolity.

This stately old aristocrat was tall and had managed, in spite of his advanced age, to retain an elegance of line which was a great satisfaction to him. His face, however, was almost mummified beneath his dry, much-creased skin. To hide his sunken temples he brushed his hair neatly forward in a way which reminded one of old Empire portraits, and the ends of his moustache were waxed to pin-points. He held himself as upright as age would permit, but his once martial tread had become stilted with the ever-growing stiffness of his weary old joints. Tightly ensconced in his impeccable uniform he had somewhat the air of a mechanical toy, his wooden gait adding to this effect, also the somewhat vacant stare of his washed-out blue eyes.

No end of quaint anecdotes were related about this amiable and over-ceremonious prince, who had the beautiful, somewhat conventional manners of earlier generations. Slave to the round of his royal duties, he was for ever visiting institutions, opening schools, laying foundation-stones, inaugurating State buildings and so forth. One day, inspecting a prison, he had become somewhat fatigued, but continued bravely to manifest all the interest expected of such a conscientiously benign prince, asking endless questions of the director who was showing him round, and from time to time talking to the prisoners themselves.

Stopping before one of those whose face had struck him, he inquired as to what had been his crime and was told that the man had murdered his mother. With unrelaxed amiability the old Grand Duke exclaimed : " Oh ! Madame his mother, very interesting," and, turning to the director : " What sentence has the good man been given ? " " Life-long penal servitude." " Oh ! indeed ; well, in remembrance of my royal visit I desire that he be pardoned the last ten years of his punishment," and grandly the old gentleman passed on.

On another occasion, being driven through a street of newly erected houses of which the burghers were very proud, he graciously admired the town's laudable efforts and amiably inquired: "Have all these houses been built here?"

There is many another little tale which could be told about this dear old gentleman, who was even then a relic of the past, but this is not his story, and I must pass on.

## Chapter XII

### ROYALTIES VISIT ROUMANIA

**K**ING CAROL preferred receiving his guests at Sinaia, the great love of his life. He had no interest in the Bucarest palace, an old State building lacking in beauty, charm and comfort. He would never spend a penny upon improving or smartening it up; it remained therefore a somewhat primitive building with a few good rooms and one fine grand staircase, but no adequate apartments in which to put up visitors.

*Der Onkel* was too busy a man to care much about entertaining guests; his life was so drawn up to schedule that any break in the usual round was an upheaval; even visits from his family disturbed him if they were announced or proposed during the months when he was in town.

He was conscious that his old palace offered little comfort, nor were his days, whilst parliament was sitting, so arranged as to leave time for entertaining guests, members of the family or otherwise. He was afraid they would be bored, whilst they certainly would disturb him. The whole, somewhat heavy machinery of the Bucarest court life was run to the complete exclusion of "gaiety" or entertainment of any sort. The King did, however, give a few court balls during the winter season, but these were included amongst the duties he imposed upon himself and the royal family and were in no wise to be looked upon as "pleasure," a word King Carol had effaced from his dictionary. That I finally enjoyed his court balls, which for me meant occasions for airing my fine clothes and meeting my friends and admirers, was but the exception which proved the rule.

I shall, however, never forget the cruel ordeal of my first Bucarest court ball. I was just seventeen and quite a stranger in an unknown world, the prey of a thousand eyes,



THE DRESS I WORE FOR THE MINUET (WITH CAROL).



and I was feeling ill. Of course to my simple conception of things a ball meant dancing; this seemed to surprise Uncle, but after all why should not the child dance if her partners were carefully chosen according to a princess's dignity? So after *reifliches Ueberlegen*, an elderly cavalry colonel, gay in his day perhaps, but certainly not in mine, was brought up to me and away we sailed round the large room, all the other dancers politely making way for us. It was a terrible ordeal; the colonel did his best, but I felt miserably humiliated because of what I considered the weight of his years and returned to the royal circle almost in tears.

It was only several years later that I began enjoying these balls. I had gained a certain footing of my own, faces were becoming familiar to me, I no more felt such a shivering little outsider and I was getting accustomed to being devoured by so many eyes. Two seasons running we were actually encouraged to dance costumed quadrilles such as the pavane, and a minuet and also Japanese and peasant dances. Both my husband and I danced in these; they were very pretty and have remained a brilliant memory in the annals of Bucarest's sedate court entertainments.

I loved dancing in my day and had the habit of changing my gown towards the end of the evening when the old King and Queen retired and the room was cleared for the cotillion. For our state entry and *cercle* I would appear in a long, stately gown, as grand and dignified as possible and always carefully chosen so as to make the right effect, but when the real dancing began, I would run off and change, reappearing in a dress better suited for vigorous exercise, for indeed in those days of the valse and cotillion dancing was quite an exertion.

I used to enjoy these cotillions, so did my husband; the room was large, the floor excellent, the dancers mostly good with but a few uncomfortable exceptions whom we used to call the "dangers" because they tore your dress and trod on your toes, and it was still of paramount importance to pair off with a pleasant partner. I always knew exactly with whom I wanted to dance, but found it diplomatic to valse through a series of bores first, so as to gain the right of dancing with the favourite. No one was, I suppose, taken



in by these naïve subterfuges for I was not a very good actress and deluded, I suppose, no one but myself.

But to come back to the subject of visits.

There were, of course, occasions when Uncle could not avoid receiving at Bucarest, especially when a sovereign came to see him, or a crown prince, when it was considered *de rigueur* that he should first pass through the capital where the citizens were eager to show their appreciation by preparing a big reception.

By far the most important guest we ever received was the Emperor of Austria, dear old Franz Joseph. (The Tsar's visit was much later, in 1914.) I was very young in those days and still regarded such events as pleasurable excitements.

King Carol had a feeling of affectionate respect for the old Emperor who was a true friend to Roumania's King, even when his politics weighed somewhat heavily upon the striving little country which showed rather uncomfortable signs of living, thriving and . . . spreading.

The Emperor Franz Joseph came on the 16th of September, 1896, and his advent in our midst was looked upon as an occasion for great rejoicing and demonstrations of sympathy, and my husband and I were also called upon to do our share as honourably as possible.

At this same date my father also expressed a wish to come and see me for the first time and my joy was great, but Uncle was not quite sure if it suited him to have any other royal guest at the same time as the Emperor and persuaded me to write as tactfully as possible to my parent saying that, as we were expecting this very official visit, would not Papa perhaps prefer coming a little later. But luckily Papa did not take the hint and answered that on the contrary he would be only too delighted to meet the dear old Emperor again, whom he had not seen for many a year; so Uncle had to include the Duke of Coburg in his festive programme.

Papa, of course, lived in our house and I remember having sent him the queer petition to "bring his cook with him"! Papa declared that he had often been asked to bring a friend, a gun or a fishing-rod, but this was the first time he had ever been invited with his cook.

The reason for this unconventional demand was that our very young household was in continual difficulties with its cooks. They never seemed to remain the year round and I was quite at a loss, my house being a very big one and rather unwieldy to manage with the not very efficient aid I received from those in authority. General Robescu, the head of our household, otherwise an amiable gentleman, was quite unequal to settling kitchen difficulties.

It had become proverbial in the family that we could never keep a cook, and Mamma continually teased me much on this subject; we even once had a bet together that if I managed to keep my cook beyond the New Year she would give me a certain coveted Italian water-colour in her possession. I won my picture but I cannot swear that the cook much outstayed the 1st of January.

Cooks of every kind and every nationality kept passing through our kitchen during the first years; a Russian who wanted to enrich himself too quickly, a German who was deplorably inadequate, a Frenchman who thought himself a poet and hid little musical boxes in his puddings and disliked General Robescu with Latin unrestraint, a Pole who suffered from chilblains, and a Czech who could not get on with his wife, etc. etc.

Other young households have, I believe, known the same sort of trouble, and we were not an exception, but I felt very humiliated at having to ask my father for the loan of his cook; but let me hastily add that the cook actually in my service now is soon going to celebrate his thirty years' jubilee, which proves that the culinary difficulties did not last for ever. But as one of the features of Uncle's programme for the Austrian Emperor's entertainment was an official lunch we were to give at Cotroceni, it was of paramount importance to have a good cook, and the Coburg cook was quite a celebrity. I am glad to say that our lunch was a great success and Papa rubbed his hands in silent glee.

It was the first and only time Papa ever visited me in Roumania, and I was pathetically eager that he should feel at home in our house. In those days I was not a very competent housewife; I found local peculiarities hard to cope with, and a deplorable inability to scold my servants was not

particularly conducive to order. In Roumania nothing is naturally tidy, there is little routine, and accustomed to Occidental precision I did not realize what a continual effort it would mean to hold my own when dealing with quite unexpected and perplexing Eastern negligences.

With the years Papa had become very silent ; sometimes, in fact, he could be quite glum, and he liked best to be left alone to his own devices and desires. He had his own habits and these we had been taught rigorously to respect. No one could be more charming than Papa on the days when he was gay and sociable, but what he liked best was to read his newspapers by the hour, seated ensconced behind them, a glass of beer at hand from which he from time to time would slowly drink.

At that period we had only two children, Carol and Elisabetha. We were very proud of them and they shared every hour of our day. Elisabetha, then about three years old, like her grandfather, was very silent ; she seldom expressed her feelings or desires, but her movements were deliberate and precise. Her face was very round, her features small, regular, absurdly classical, her gaze direct and piercing, sometimes almost fierce ; she kept her very small mouth tightly shut. In fact a queer little morsel of humanity, but very attractive in her own small way.

This wee little girl took a strange fancy to her taciturn grandfather ; he was " canny " to her, words were unnecessary, she felt comfortable in his company.

I can still see her dressed in a funny little Roumanian costume with an orange handkerchief tied peasant-wise round her face which made it look still chubbier, quietly stalking after him, dragging an absurd little straw chair about with her, closely observing the movements of the elderly, silent gentleman who had so suddenly come into her life, to see where he would settle down. When Papa had selected the seat and the corner which suited him and had buried himself behind his paper, Elisabetha would place her chair close beside him and remain there absolutely mute, but quite contented as though at last having found the companion who suited her best. From time to time Papa would peep at her over his paper, but he understood that nothing was expected

of him, so these two queer associates exchanged never a word. But the moment Papa moved, Elisabetha, straw chair and all, moved with him, ready to take up her position beside him, no matter where he settled down. Elisabetha seldom showed strong preferences for anyone, so these small manœuvres were really amusing to watch.

All the energy and goodwill of court, town and country were called upon to receive the old Emperor worthily. It meant much to King Carol that this venerated sovereign should be honoured in every way, it suited his politics as well as his sympathies, and with King Carol these two, affection and politics, went always closely hand in hand. Young and ignorant though I was, I distinctly felt that Uncle considered this a great day for himself and his country.

Nando was very eager that I should honourably do my share; he was always a little anxious on official occasions, afraid that I should not be sufficiently impressed or that I might be too offhand. It is true that I never could learn very ceremonious or conventional manners; I was too much a child of nature and had never lived in centres of severe etiquette, so my training in these arts was scanty and insufficient, but I was naturally amiable when not too shy. I had a kindly feeling towards all men and, after all, youth and a pretty face are natural allies. Aunt Elisabeth was, on the contrary, past master in the art of receiving. Her social talents were exceptional and her conversation charming, interesting, though occasionally a little high-flown and over-poetical for very *terre à terre* people. But I learnt much from her, though in those days her excessive amiability made me feel sometimes a little uncomfortable. I would not always "play up," for the young are always afraid of being absurd and I came of a family little accustomed to show or express their feelings.

I cannot remember all the details of that Imperial visit; it is so long ago and there is no one left to talk it over with, they are all gone! But I remember the big parade where I proudly rode beside Uncle and the Emperor, and Papa was also with us in a blue German hussar uniform.

Later, King Carol had a picture painted by Adukiowitzch

of this celebrated review where he led his troops past the old Emperor. Aunty looked on from a carriage harnessed *à la Daumont*, accompanied by her ladies-in-waiting. The Emperor was very pleased with my riding and soon after, as a souvenir of this memorable day, sent me a thoroughbred horse from one of his studs, a lovely mare called *Preciosa* of which I was intensely proud and which Ducky rode a great deal when she came to me.

After the Bucarest festivities were over, we all moved to Sinaia where Uncle much enjoyed showing his old friend the castle he had built with such love and care, and of which he was so proud. Here in Castel Peleş there was ample room for guests and an apartment, specially arranged for the old Emperor, goes still to-day by the name of "*Kaiserzimmer*."

Here, so-called rural entertainments had been organized in the beautiful mountain setting, especially a solemn walk in procession up to the "*Stăna*," a lovely spot on the mountain-side where Uncle's cows were put out to pasture in summer, and where a more or less sylvan lunch was given when everybody was expected to be simple, jolly and harmless. But an official picnic with grand guests is never particularly mirthful: it has always something just a little absurd in its pretence at artlessness. Etiquette and all constraint are supposed to be put aside, but this succeeds very rarely; it is difficult to extirpate all stiffness from kings, diplomats and court functionaries whose very *raison d'être* is ceremony. There is no real ring of sincerity about the whole proceeding, nor were the two chief actors, King Carol and his worthy guest, cast for a light part.

Aunty did her best to animate the outdoor meal. She had the faculty of seeing things as she desired, but her poetic exuberance was not always to Uncle's taste.

I remember well how she was dressed that day, in a queer red garment very much looped up. In former days she liked to undertake sudden excursions into forest and mountain, followed by a train of young girls and people of all sorts, who, under the charm of her poetical language, saw the world, anyhow whilst she was talking, as she desired they should.

Now she seldom left the house, but I could not help

admiring how light of foot she still was for one who never took any exercise except pacing up and down her own rooms. She had very pretty feet, narrow and small : she was proud of these and walked in a special way, elegantly, putting her toes down first, and inviting us to do the same, declaring that it was thus all men should walk, a remark which Uncle received with the special grunt he emitted when he disapproved of her utterances.

I have retained a vague memory of the Emperor's followers, but I distinctly remember Graf Paar, chief of Franz Joseph's military household, who took a great fancy to me and showed me much attention. Austrians are very amiable and easy to get on with, and all these gentlemen imagined that they must make up to me, which made me, silly little goose, feel quite important.

I am afraid that this is about all I remember of that royal visit, but I know that it was considered a great success and also beneficial to the good feeling between the two countries which was essential, as very close neighbours are generally not over-fond of each other.

Kaiser Wilhelm never paid a visit to King Carol ; all through his life Uncle expected this politeness of the one whom he considered the head of the family, although the Sigmaringen Hohenzollerns were the older line. It was a great deal owing to Cousin Charly and her intrigues that her brother never came to Roumania, for she carefully stimulated any ill feeling existing between the two sovereigns. It is difficult to explain exactly why she did this ; I believe her love of mischief was so ingrained that it was a game she could not resist. My husband regretted this deeply, for he would have much liked to see the German Emperor follow the Austrian Emperor's example ; but he hoped in vain.

My father prolonged his visit after the Emperor's departure ; he liked Sinaia and was contented in our little house and graciously accepted our small daughter's silent attentions, flattered and amused at the child's evident sympathy for him.

Long ago in Aunty's youth, she had had a feeling for my father.

Obedient to his very royal mother's wishes, Papa had, as

quite a young man, undertaken a *tournée* through the courts of Europe, so as to review the eligible princesses carefully drawn up on a list by Queen Victoria. This list brought him also to Neu Wied to see young Elisabeth, noted for her charm and exceptional intelligence.

Elisabeth of Wied was *schwärmerisch*, high-flown, poetical ; brought up against artists and intellectuals, she loved music, literature, philosophy, was in fact an enthusiast and somewhat of a blue stocking, but a poetical blue stocking full of ideals. Papa was good-looking, his eyes were exceedingly blue and when the young princess and her mother discovered that he played the violin, he was taken out into their beloved beech-woods and had to play to them there under the trees.

It was amusing to hear the way each described their remembrance of this sylvan concert. To Auntie it had remained an outstanding event, a marvellous experience, the recollection of which was cherished all the days of her life.

"It was my one little romance," she told me.

To Papa, alas, it had been one of the chief reasons why he had struck Elisabeth of Wied off his mother's list. To the shy young Englishmen this poetical episode had been an excruciatingly painful experience.

Auntie confessed to me what my father had meant to her : a dream that did not come true. I tried to prepare her for the change she would find in her ideal after so many years ; but she was sentimentally excited at the thought of seeing him again, and still kept in her heart a vision of a blue-eyed youth with a violin under his chin. . . . Well, of course, it was a disillusion.

First of all Papa had never been what she had imagined, no, not even then in his early youth, for "things are not what they seem" ; the violin had never been an essential but only an appendage. It was not young Alfred's everyday habit to play under the trees of the forest ; even on that memorable occasion he had done it grudgingly and only to comply with the ecstatic ladies' desire, but this vision of the good-looking young prince with the violin pressed to his cheek was to them the *real* man, such as their poetical fantasy desired him to be. And to day he was very much the old gentleman, with the ingrained habits of one who saw life as it was and not

through particularly rosy spectacles : at that he was of the earth earthy, and had scanty patience with what he termed 'sentimental nonsense.'

In spite of all this, Aunty still clung to the idea that Papa loved music above all things. She could not help seeing that he had become a rather taciturn old gentleman not in the least given to high-flown rhapsodies, but nothing is more tenacious than an old dream. In spite of the most evident reality, Carmen Sylva, the poet-queen, wanted to awake in this elderly prince, whose illusions had been shed one by one along the road of life, some echo of that far-off day spent under the great beech trees of the Neu Wied forest.

Unfortunately Papa's advent came during the period when Aunty thought she had discovered a musical genius in a painter of doubtful talent. This gentleman has been already mentioned ; the absurd old boy who imagined he could sing equally tenor, bass or baritone.

This mistaken enthusiasm for a man really absurd was the reason why a second picnic was organized, Aunty desiring that her protégé should display his talents in a wild and romantic setting. So we once more set forth under Aunty's command, being led through a forest to a wild place amongst rocks, and here, grouped about more or less uncomfortably upon hard stones, we were given a concert I am not going to try to describe.

To make things worse, Aunty, who lived not in a world of realities, liked to assemble many people around her, the more the better, no matter how miscellaneous nor how indiscriminately shuffled together : old and young, rich and poor, of different classes, of different nationalities, the *blasés* as well as the artless, the sophisticated as well as those "poor of spirit" ; all these had to follow her lead, for Carmen Sylva needed an audience.

So Papa found himself one of a heterogeneous company which meant nothing to him, and which he passed in review with none too neighbourly feelings. He did not particularly relish being dragged up steep mountain paths, nor did he find either pleasure or repose on his rocky seat.

I was feeling nervous, knowing that my father was somewhat short of temper, nor was he particularly patient or long-



suffering ; when displeased it was not his way to bury his feelings under a mask of amiability. So I watched him anxiously, knowing that his nerves were going to be severely tried.

I had two young English girl friends with me and we exchanged apprehensive glances ; we saw the humorous side of the situation, we were accustomed to Aunt's eccentricities, but we realized that Papa's British conventionality was going to receive something of a shock.

And a shock indeed it did receive. The pseudo-singer did his worst, appearing suddenly from behind a rock, and striking an heroic attitude considered in keeping with the mountain background, gave vent to a series of extraordinary sounds which Aunt listened to with clasped hands.

I sat as close to Papa as I dared, with the feeling that I could ward off disaster. When displeased he had a way of sticking out his underlip in a sort of pout, which we always considered a danger signal and it meant that we had to tread carefully. Once he turned to me and said :

" This is outrageous ; am I to be made a fool of ? "

" No, no, Papa, but just wait a little and I shall invent some excuse to get off."

And get off we did, at least, before the storm burst, but the ordeal had been terrible ; my knees were actually shaking when I got up, but I cannot remember what plausible excuse I found for carrying Papa off, leaving to her concert Aunt and all those who had followed in her wake.

Papa kept snorting his indignation all the way home, angry with each stone his toes met along the steep descent.

" Is that what you call singing here in Roumania ? "

" No, no, Papa, but Aunt, you know . . . "

" No, I don't know, and don't want to ; I had the feeling of being in a lunatic asylum ! "

" No, no ! but Aunt, you see . . . "

" No, I don't see, and don't want to see ; it was preposterous ! "

And thus all the way home.

Later, when Papa had left, Aunt one day said to me with a sigh :

" Darling, I did not find a trace in him of the young

man who was my dream ; such a pity, nothing at all, not even his love for music."

And that moment, sadly feeling the difference of being or not being a poet, I gently tried to explain :

"You see, Aunty, not many people at sixty are just as they were at twenty-one."

"I have not changed much," said Aunty. And this indeed was true.

The Princess's guests were somewhat of an anxiety to the "Old Palace," they were inclined to upset the safe order of things. The one who awoke the most apprehension was Cousin Boris. Being a grand duke he could not be easily set aside and had to be received with every honour, but the moment this young man appeared on the scene, Castel Peleş lighted all its danger signals.

Cousin Boris brought with him a whiff of that repudiated *monde où l'on s'amuse*. He, too, dangerously stood for all those things carefully eliminated from our well-regulated existence, tuned to duty not to pleasure. From the point of view of conventional safety I quite understand that King Carol dreaded our coalition ; Boris most evidently represented that pleasant side of life from which I was to be steadily isolated.

Boris was a good fellow, but from the point of view of my educators, he was certainly *pas de tout repos*.

He was gay, irresponsible, wild and sentimental by turns, rich, over-prodigious, carefree, full of fun and nonsense ; for all that, at heart he was sad and full of "spleen," he had about him that touch of the imponderable so peculiar to the Russian, something unaccountable, unfathomable, which made him a stimulating but also a somewhat disquieting companion. In most Russians there is that strange something, a mixture of saint and sinner, and one can never know which side will suddenly predominate. There was however little of the saint about Boris !

The "Old Palace" anxiously watched the development of our association ; when Boris was let loose amongst us anything might be expected, as he lived according to his whims ; loving fun and excitement, he looked for it every-

where. He loved riding and also the showy, glittering side of military life, but he also adored music and poetry and could be very sentimental.

Once he came with his younger brother André, a youth with an adorable pink-and-white, chubby face; another time he was with my brother Alfred, and a very ardent A.D.C.: Alfred was accompanied by three military comrades; I also had an Englishman in the house and learnt during that autumn season how difficult it was for a very young hostess to cope with half a dozen jealous admirers at a time and vowed that never again would I unite so many males together under my roof.

Both Alfred and Boris were enchanted with Roumania, it was quite a discovery to them. They did not see it from the side which had been presented to me, but according to the pleasures it could offer. Amongst these was the gipsy music, for which they had a real passion. Innocently unaware that this sort of music was principally associated with dissipated forms of amusement, I used to send for the "Lăutars" whenever my guests clamoured for them, generally in the evening, till Uncle stepped in with his veto, forbidding that Ciolac and his dark-faced band should play so often in our house.

According to popular Roumanian custom, the gipsy minstrels go with you everywhere, they appear at every picnic, every country excursion, whenever two or three are gathered together, not for prayer but for fun. They are indispensable at weddings and christenings, but also turn up at funerals when their violins have a special wail. The gipsy band is an inherent part of Roumanian life, a quaint and picturesque annexe which Nando and I had adopted almost unawares. You never had to *call* for the gipsies, they were always there of themselves, like the flies or the mosquitoes, their sometimes rapturous, sometimes wild and always wailing music accompanied every entertainment, adding to these a certain weird charm special to the country.

Even when we went out for our riding picnics Ciolac and his followers managed to appear, and there was certainly a good deal of wild riding when Boris was there, and these exciting cavalcades occasionally rather strongly resembled





AT COTROCENI IN 1907.

our Malta rides. My Roşiori officers replaced the naval officers, Cousin Boris was there instead of kind Cousin George. Only there were about ten years between the two, and I was no more a little girl but a married lady.

I especially remember a fatal afternoon when Boris lamed a horse lent by the palace, by chasing a score of peaceful cattle grazing in a field. We pretended we were cowboys rounding up a herd of bullocks, which meant some rather violent gallops over none too good ground.

Of course a huge fuss was made about the laming of this royal horse; no one regretted it more than I did, it was quite against my riding-code to lame a horse, "but accidents will happen even in the best regulated families" and we had to face as best we could the trouble we had brought down upon our heads.

It can well be imagined how gleefully the Chief Inquisitor seized upon these somewhat extravagant exploits of the young to weave out of them endless dark tales with which to shock the Pharisees.

But every dog must have his day, so I suppose I had to have mine. I only know this: whatever day I did have I paid for, tenfold, but I was ready to do so. Life is life and has to be lived with its ups and downs; its hours of folly as well as its long periods of cold common sense, all go for the building up and gradual forming of a character. I regret nothing, and love to look back upon these sudden outbursts of irrepressible enjoyment when the spirit of fun drove all caution away, when every risk seemed worth while as long as we could laugh to our heart's content. There had to be occasional cures of laughter so as to save us from becoming old before our time.

Gradually my friendships became more sober; it must be remembered that in those Boris days I was little more than twenty years old, and royal or not, youth demands its right which, if entirely denied, finally sours the temper or finds an outlet in things less safe than chasing bullocks in a field and listening to gipsy music.

Through every phase of my education and apprenticeship on the road of life, I remained a healthy, normal young

woman, taking my pleasure when I could, but also accepting the manifold duties imposed upon me. I was certainly not worldly-wise, but never was I morose or resentful. Reproof made my cheeks flame and tears come to my eyes, but although I suffered from being so often unfairly judged and criticized I always endeavoured to understand *why* others were so unkind and tried to look at myself from their point of view. I have always had a disconcerting way of excusing my enemy, I harbour an invincible idealism which drives me to see the good in people. Treason is excruciating pain to me, so I would rather find the fault in myself than accept the thought of deliberate deceit in others. I always say: "They do not really understand, there is some mistake somewhere, people don't act like that; it is not natural. . . ."

If this attitude is considered too stupid, I must explain that the completely shady sides of life never came my way, my protected, somewhat isolated and very much guarded life saved me from these, and I therefore preserved a sort of naïveté, or sort of ignorance about sordid things which allowed me to have an unembarrassed attitude towards the world and all those therein, male and female. I was completely unaware of those dark undercurrents beneath the outward appearance of things, and this preserved in me a sort of ingenuousness which some took for pose or even for very excellent acting; but there was no acting about it; I was genuinely ignorant of what most people knew or had even experienced.

Much, much later in life, I was immeasurably shocked and pained when through horrible talk, it was little by little revealed to me what people said and thought of each other, and still more horrified when I realized that some of what was related was founded upon truth. This was indeed a nasty discovery.

Perhaps my conception of life and people was based upon illusions and unreality, nevertheless I am grateful that these revelations came to me so late in life; it made my youth happier, I breathed purer air, it kept my thoughts clean, my courage unclouded, and gave me that enthusiastic impetus towards all that was fine, high, great, which would certainly have been tarnished had I known that things were not as they

seemed. For my special sort of work it was better to believe in humanity, or I could never have become the leader and helper in the hour of need.

If those of the "Old Palace" criticized our guests, we on our side were often bored by those who came to Castel Peleş.

Late summer and autumn were mostly the seasons when these put in an appearance, and we were expected to do our share of the entertaining, and a constant contact was kept up between our two houses. We were especially obliged to take part in the long and wearisome meals, followed by still longer and more wearisome *cercles*; Uncle reserving this hour for earnest conversation with people not received in special audience.

These *cercles* took place in the so-called Maurischer Saal, a long room with windows on both sides and no furniture except rows of seats against the walls; a room little conducive to cosiness—and no one was ever supposed to sit down.

Especially the lunches were our despair, it meant dressing up in the middle of the day and curtailing the precious summer afternoons when we longed to be out in the woods.

Uncle expected his family to submit to these daily repeated ordeals. He had no idea of the meaning of country life and carried the ennui of Bucarest over into his mountain residence. For the first few years I submitted unresignedly to this order of things; I had not yet found my footing, but later, in spite of Nando's frowns, I would liberate myself by going straight up to Uncle and declaring that the children and the sunshine outside were calling to me, might I go?

Uncle was at first rather astonished, and probably also displeased at this liberty I was taking; no one as yet had dared to have ideas of their own, but he gradually got accustomed to my unconventionalities and finally smiled upon my impatience. I was never aggressive, only very frank, explaining to him why I wanted to be off, and finally he would indulgently pat me on the shoulder: "Geh nur, ich weiss Du kannst es in Hause nicht länger aushalten."

When Nando reproved me for my lack of conventional manners, I tried to explain to him that useless sacrifice falsifies values. It was infinitely more important to me not to waste



those precious summer afternoons than it was for Uncle to hold me there, a bored and useless witness of his long political talks with what seemed to me then, exceedingly dull people.

Aunty took refuge in being a martyr or in going to sleep with a smile on her lips which made us all feel most uncomfortable, but I had no martyr's vocation and my desperate yawns were even more compromising than Aunty's snoozing. After that it only needed a little courage to break through rules which had no logical foundation; a habit could just as well become established in my favour as against it: again a question of values. . . .

It is a mistake to submit to the "intolerable." It is of no use to anyone. It was a sort of instinct of self-preservation which gave me the courage to throw off that which bred in me feelings of exasperation. I was more useful to the community at large when my patience was not tried beyond breaking point. Some people put their pride in bearing the unbearable, some in breaking through it; I had better feelings towards Uncle when I did not submit to illogical tyrannies, I did not care to lie low and growl and complain behind his back, I preferred taking the bull by the horns and establishing once and for all a situation supportable to all sides. And this, after the first shock of encounter, was peacefully accepted and smoothly woven into the everyday order of things, which meant that in this at least I had scored.

There were two things at which my royal patience struck; one was this wasting of summer afternoons, and the other was over-long church services. I got out of these whenever I could, trying to make up in other ways for this leaving undone of things that ought to be done.

I love the Orthodox service, but I consider the long standing little conducive to devotion, as finally one cannot help thinking more about one's feet than about God, nor could I ever feel in sympathy with prayers indefinitely repeated; I had the sensation that the Most High was being as much tried as I was.

I like to pray my own prayers and later in life I wrote a "Queen's Prayer," which I shall perhaps cite later on. Eternal repetitions are one of the most tedious trials of life, even the daily putting on of one's stockings becomes a

drudgery from which one would gladly escape if one could invent some form of *Ersatz*.

There is a chronic impatience in my blood, a constant revolt against all servitude, be it of the body or of the spirit, and yet patience has been the very basis of my life and success, a royal, never-ending, cruelly long patience which never dared be denied.

Now to return to Uncle and Aunt's guests.

Undeniably one of the most interesting and entertaining was Ferdinand of Bulgaria. He came more than once ; as Prince with his first wife, mother of his children, and later as King with his second wife Leonore, but he also came alone, and I must confess that his appearance in our midst was always welcome to me because he was so extraordinarily amusing.

Both Uncle Carol and Uncle Ferdinand were considered clever politicians and diplomats, which they undeniably were, but their schools were very different.

There was not much love lost between these two sovereigns, but their politeness towards each other was irreproachable and admirable ; a grand display of perfect manners. For the looker-on it was as good as a play to see them together, because greater contrasts it would have been difficult to find.

*Der Onkel* was earnest, somewhat pompous, took himself and his work tremendously seriously, and certainly his methods were as upright and devoid of double dealing as is compatible with the professions of reigning and diplomacy ; but Uncle was entirely devoid of a sense of humour, nor did he understand the art of small talk and elegant conversation. Uncle was in fact somewhat of a pedant.

Imagine as contrast Ferdinand of Coburg, world-renowned for his intelligence and love of intrigue, which he professed like a fine art. The French blood running in his veins made of him an incomparable *causeur*, his repartees were sparkling, his irony light, intangible, and always to the point. Sharp-witted, all-observing, with a superfine sense of humour, he often indulged in the delicate luxury of laughing at himself, of making fun of his looks, his idiosyncrasies, his tastes, his likes and dislikes. All this furnished subjects for endless

witty conversation and allowed him to use his sarcasm to his heart's content.

Ferdinand was also an artist to his finger-tips, art was bread and water to him, and as botanist and biologist his equal were difficult to find even in the scientific world ; his love for flowers, plants and animals was deep-rooted and convincing.

There may have been less comfortable sides to Uncle Ferdinand's nature, but a more pleasant, stimulating and erudite companion, when he set out to charm his audience, cannot be imagined.

To anyone with a sense of humour, to see the two kings together was really exceedingly entertaining.

Uncle always took himself seriously at all hours of the day, at all seasons of the year and in every company. Life was to him a long chain of important events, nor did he ever ease this attitude of heavy earnestness, whilst Bulgaria's monarch was a great actor.

*Il aimait s'écouter* and saw himself in the parts it in turn pleased him to interpret, be it that of a wily, ceremonious politician, the easily offended ruler whose every susceptibility must be respected, or that of the debonair, polite, sarcastic *homme du monde*, super-refined, all smiles and amiability, or even that of the sombre, almost tragic, tyrant of a mysterious country always in ebullition. His talk would then be of danger, plague, treason and sudden death ; his voice would become dramatic, his accents thrilling, and he managed to evoke sinister pictures full of dark possibilities. But never for a moment during these recitations would he quite lose that expression of half-amused irony, in fact he had almost a wink in that small, sly, all-seeing eye of his, meant for those clever enough to share with him the fun he was having by thus incorporating these different exciting personalities.

Physically, these two monarchs were also interesting contrasts, Uncle æsthetic, sparse, with no pretence to elegance, blue-blooded but for all that a self-made man, proud of his achievements with just a touch of naïveté about him because he took himself so hopelessly *au sérieux*. Uncle was a soldier and somewhat of a Spartan, or better said : there was some-



KING FERDINAND OF BULGARIA, A PHOTOGRAPH HE HIMSELF  
CALLS "ULTIMA PHASIS."



thing of the monk about King Carol. But Bulgaria's ruler was tall, his figure somewhat ponderous, a sybarite fond of discussing his health, posing as a valetudinarian, averse from physical effort, caring for his ease and comfort, exceedingly *soigné* as to dress and general elegance, grand seigneur to the point of decadence, sarcastic about himself and others, always having the laugh on his side. His small, watchful eyes were set rather closely together over a nose no doubt very aristocratic, but certainly of exaggerated proportions.

An ardent lover of beauty, Uncle Ferdinand was well aware that his nose was too prominent a feature, so he was for ever mentioning this unfortunate appendage which he called *die Dulderin* (the sufferer) and once showing me a group photograph of which he formed the centre he said to me in his somewhat nasal voice, "Avec ces tout petits yeux et ce nez comme une trompe, ne suis-je pas tout à fait comme un éléphant? Mais, ma chère nièce, j'ai aussi toute la sagacité de ce si vénérable quadrupède"—and then he could laugh a little in the way of poor "Aunt Philippa," his eyes completely disappearing, drawing in the air in a peculiar way through that offending nose.

Ferdinand of Bulgaria had a strange passion for precious stones, he would fondle them as though their touch gave him almost physical ecstasy. Considering me a worthy audience, he would bring out his different little stories for my benefit, knowing that I appreciated his subtleties, and thus he once drew a picture of himself which I have never forgotten, a picture where he is seated all by himself in a dimly lighted chamber, draped in a long black velvet dressing-gown fingering his priceless gems: "Peux-tu me voir, tout de noir vêtu, laissant rubis, saphirs, émeraudes, perles et diamants couler entre mes doigts; drappé de velours, tout seul dans une demie-obscurité, très chère nièce, c'était, je te l'assure, une vraie volupté."

Uncle Ferdinand had beautifully kept, very white hands and wore his nails overlong, and looking at those pale fingers, ever afterwards it seemed to me that I saw the many-coloured gems slipping through them one by one.

In everyday life these pale fingers were covered with beautiful rings; his gestures were slow, had about them

something of a priest officiating in church ; besides, he always wore a cross attached to a chain hidden beneath his coat or uniform, and he was continually toying with this cross, declaring that it gave him a venerable, almost a sacerdotal, air. I think Uncle Ferdinand would have very much enjoyed being the Pope.

I loved talking to him about flowers and animals, it was like turning over the pages of a superbly written book ; he had travelled through many countries and could tell me with the minutest details where the rarest flowers grew, describing the soil in which they thrived, their habits, colour, perfume, and his language was so descriptive that picture upon picture passed before my eyes.

King Ferdinand had the disconcerting talent of being able to keep up two conversations at a time. He often indulged in this whilst talking with King Carol, whose wit was less chameleon-like. His serious, pompous discourse, was for the King, his amusing "asides" for the younger generation, but these were so smoothly woven into his speech that, before Uncle could notice any byplay, he was back again in the middle of his political dissertation as though there had never been any deviation from the central subject.

Once at a big dinner at Bucarest, I was sitting on his left. It was just after he had declared himself king and he was on his way back from Russia. He had been officially received with every honour, for Uncle Ferdinand was a great stickler as to etiquette ; outwardly he was on his best behaviour, exceedingly ceremonious, covered with decorations, honey dripping from his lips. Speeches befitting the occasion were pronounced on both sides, he had just sat down again after having delivered himself of his most amiable discourse, glasses had been raised, healths drunk, then leaning over towards me, his wee eyes sparkling with mischief, he whispered into my ear : "Et très chère nièce, il faut savoir qu'au fond nous nous détestons !" But I was given to understand that, having Coburg blood in my veins, I was not included in this "detestation."

Such was King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, seen by a niece who, herself not lacking in humour, was occasionally allowed

a peep behind the scenes ; it can be well imagined that I thoroughly enjoyed his occasional appearance in our midst.

I am afraid however that this uniquely entertaining gentleman was not the most comfortable of husbands. Both his wives stood in great awe of him and would never have dared oppose his will in the smallest degree. Poor delicate Marie Louise was a frail, small woman with a long, rather melancholy Greco face, wearing the many magnificent jewels with which her husband had overwhelmed her, as though they were a burden beyond her strength. Her large washed-out blue eyes had a resigned, pathetic expression ; she was what she looked, a sad woman with not enough health to endure all that was expected of her. She bore her exigent master four children and then she died, and death was probably her happy release.

Born a Bourbon of Parma she was very aristocratic and intensely Catholic, so that any derogation from this faith was to her mortal sin, yet, just she had to bear the grief of seeing her eldest son rechristened in the Orthodox Church after having first been baptized a Catholic. She never got over this blow, so she allowed the first serious illness which came to her to carry her off from this world of pain and deception.

Eleonora of Reuss, the King's second wife, was quite another type. She was a Protestant and a much more vigorous and independent woman, who during the Russo-Japanese War had gone out as nurse to the wounded. She knew life and had faced it squarely ; she had an altruistic spirit, was practical, energetic, and almost middle-aged when she became the second Queen of Bulgaria, but to say that she was happy would, I think, be an exaggeration.

She served her people with generous abnegation, was a wonderful sister of charity during the Balkan, and later the World, War, but she died before peace was concluded.

Eleonora was some relation of Auntie, and once she came to Sinaia without her overpowering husband, and on this occasion we were able to appreciate her sense of fun and good-humour ; she enjoyed our family circle and brought with her two of the most beautiful Skye terriers



I have ever seen. When I think of Aunt Eleonora I always see her with those two superb canine friends.

Aunty was occasionally visited by friends of her youth, and foremost amongst these was Frau von Deichman, born a Bunsen, and Marie Bunsen, who was, I think, her niece, or was she her sister-in-law? I cannot quite remember.

Frau von Deichman had been a beauty in her youth and still had a perfect profile and long, narrow, aristocratic hands which she folded before her in a placid way. Frau von Deichman was in fact one of the most serene and imperturbable women I ever met. She spoke in a slow almost drawling way and could say the most amusing and also the most downright things without in the least changing the expression of her face or the diapason of her voice. She always looked straight before her as though gazing into distance; but in spite of this absent-minded air she was all there and though adoring Aunty with unshakable loyalty, she very often put a gentle damper on her exaggerated exuberance or brought her back to reality when her speech began to soar into too irrational spheres.

They had been playfellows, so this tranquil lady had the privilege of an old and tried friend who had shared joy and pain through many years. Her unshakable calm was in amusing contrast with Aunty's impetuosity. She always addressed her as "dear Majesty." All her sentences began with this appellation: "Dear Majesty, I think you are exaggerating just a little," "Dear Majesty, allow me to disagree, here your dear Majesty's memory is somewhat at fault," "Your dear Majesty is inclined to see through a prism which somewhat distorts or enlarges facts, allow me to bring them down to less poetic dimensions," etc. . . . etc. . . . And all this would be said with hands folded in her lap, eyes half closed and without accentuating any part of her sentences; she spoke in fact as though addressing no one in particular, only pronouncing absolute if not specially important verities.

Frau von Deichman had been exceedingly hospitable to my husband and myself when we were in England during King Edward's Coronation, and always showed me a warm

sympathy I was not often accustomed to encounter in Aunty's entourage.

Old Mr. Deichman, her husband, although almost blind, had a passion for horses and for driving a coach-and-four, and what particularly attracted me in his house was that he had had a passage made joining his drawing-room on to his stables. Of this I entirely approved.

For Marie Bunsen I felt great sympathy. There was a sort of English independence about her which fitted in with my way of looking at life, something breezy and of the open air which was invigorating; besides, she was truly an artist at heart and painted beautifully in water-colours. We used to enjoy discussing the furnishing of rooms, each of us allowing our imagination free play, exchanging ideas, interested in each other's views upon this subject which fascinates all women who love their homes. I remember how she told me she had painted her floors and doors bright blue, which was a quaint idea.

Marie von Bunsen was one of the "Old Palace" guests I most liked being with; in those days I thought she had kindly feelings towards me, but do we ever know the inner workings of the human heart, and do we ever cease having our illusions torn from us one by one?

Of Aunty's Wied nephews and nieces I was exceedingly fond. They appeared at Sinaia from time to time and were charming young people who spoke excellent English. I made special friends with the youngest, Victor, a diplomat. All these brothers and sisters had perfect manners which did not exclude a pleasant sense of humour. None of them was really good-looking, but they were tall and very aristocratic. There was something unusual about their faces which were curiously lean, their mouths were large and well filled with strong white teeth, but when they smiled or laughed their skin had a special way of creasing over their bones, it gave them something a little wizened but for all that attractive.

King Gustav of Sweden also came once to Sinaia. He was Queen Elisabeth's first cousin, their mothers having been sisters. He was a charming gentleman, simple, friendly

and ready to enjoy anything, and ever since that visit I kept in touch with him. There was also a special link between us as his heir had married my first cousin, Margaret, eldest daughter of the Duke of Connaught, who died, alas, soon after the Great War.

But the visit of which I have kept the most amused remembrance is the visit of Emma, the Dowager Queen of Holland. Emma was also Aunt's first cousin and although absolute contrasts as to ways, manners and disposition, there was an almost uncanny resemblance between them. They were as two plants raised from the same stock, but having been planted in different soils they had developed differently, each having unconsciously absorbed something of the genus of the land to which they had given their lives.

Both were tall, stout, florid, with exaggeratedly high foreheads, and both wore spectacles over blue, short-sighted eyes; but in spite of this undeniable physical resemblance, which struck you the moment you saw them together, their personalities were exact opposites.

Aunt had developed along ethereal, idealistic lines, casting from her all that was prosaic, practical, *terre à terre*. With a superb indifference to facts, Carmen Sylva's imagination had created for her an unsubstantial, poetic world little based upon reality.

Queen Emma, on the contrary, was of the earth earthy, a staid, matronly, matter-of-fact lady who kept her fantasy (if she had any) well under control. For many years, during Queen Wilhelmina's childhood, she had been Regent of the Netherlands and had absorbed the placidity of that steady and sober country which she had ruled with male efficiency. She understood all about diplomacy, politics, finance, economy, about laws, rules, routines, conventions, about the sternly sedate, legal side of all things which are the accepted basis of State, Society and progress. Queen Emma had no illusions; Queen Emma *knew*.

It was a pity perhaps that her outward appearance was not in the least imposing or majestic, she looked like a kindly housekeeper with her goody-goody lace cap, her comfortable girth and her eminently respectable but in no wise regal attire.

In my youthful disrespect I had dubbed her *die Ober-gouvernante* (head-governess), a name, it must be confessed, which rather unduly enchanted Auntie who had to endure a good deal of education whilst Cousin Emma, the ex-Regent, was in the house.

Cousin Emma, accustomed to rule, advise, admonish, considered that "Elsa," as she called Auntie, had developed on too unconventional and eccentric lines; she disapproved of her poetical form of speech, of her daring flights of imagination and the positive, prosaic words with which she made Carmen Sylva return to earth again, had certainly something wing-clipping about them. Queen Emma's remarks were each time an anticlimax of the most damping kind. They made poor Auntie suddenly appear almost ridiculous, the wind was mercilessly taken out of her sails, her impetuosity frustrated; it was as though, joyfully flying a kite of many colours, someone had suddenly cut the string and she found herself with nothing but a limp thread in hand, the beautiful kite, a thing of dreams, having vanished into space. Never did Auntie and I feel so instinctively in sympathy with each other as during Queen Emma's stay. I especially remember one scene I witnessed which is worth recounting, because so amusingly characteristic of their different attitude towards things in general and poetical literature in particular.

Auntie had a pleasant, clever young secretary called Dal'Orso. He was of Italian origin, small, vivacious and was possessor of a splendid mop of thick, naturally waved, brown hair and of many agreeable talents such as singing, violin playing, reading aloud and witty talk; he was in fact sometimes a little too witty for his situation. Devoted as he was to Auntie, the peculiar composition of her surroundings and hangers-on would periodically fill him with a comic exasperation which occasionally induced him to forget his court manners and express or demean himself in a way the Chief Inquisitor could not be expected to approve of.

I much enjoyed listening to Dal'Orso's reading. In the long Sinaia autumn evenings Auntie would gather her company about her and there would be either music or reading aloud, or sometimes only conversation whilst the ladies

sat around with their work. When Dal'Orso was the leader of these gatherings, they were mostly amusing and interesting. His vigorous youth refreshed the atmosphere, though it occasionally became somewhat electrical, because of those who disapproved of his free and easy manner.

On this particular evening the two queenly cousins were installed in two comfortable arm-chairs, facing each other, shaded lamps throwing a discreet light over their busy fingers.

Aunty, in overflowing white draperies with a white veil on her head, was handling with elegant gestures which showed off her finely shaped hands, a tatting shuttle, whilst Holland's dowager, in sober grey, lace cap and all, was demurely drawing a prosaic thread through something which looked useful.

The two royal ladies kept watching each other with guarded glances, more like rivals than two old friends.

Dal'Orso was reading Maeterlinck's "*Vie des Abeilles*," and of all things the chapter selected was the one describing the queen-bee's nuptial flight.

This flight is depicted in majestically poetical language. It shows us the sovereign-insect soaring high and ever higher into the heavens, pursued by a swarm of eager lovers. Up, up she mounts, those in her wake falling back one by one, exhausted, unable to sustain the strain of such a flight. Finally only one remains, and up there in the eternal blue, the marriage is consummated, and in a final rapture, the victorious lover gives his all, even his life, succumbing in the effort. Consumed by his own ecstasy, the male falls to pieces, his useless remains floating earthwards to become dust, the conqueror vanquished; whilst the queen, saturated with new life, rises higher and higher, into the very heart of the sun. And when finally she returns from heaven to earth, she is pregnant with a new generation.

Aunty followed each sentence with exclamations of admiration; letting her shuttle fall, she would clasp her hands in rapturous appreciation, almost swooning with delighted emotion at the thought of the Queen's return to become in all reality "the Mother of her people." The idea that the venturesome male should fall to pieces so piteously in his





ON A MAN'S SADDIE DRESSED IN MY COSSACK COSTUME.

supreme effort to capture ecstasy seemed to fill her with almost unholy satisfaction.

Queen Emma, on the contrary, sat with tight lips ; this was not the sort of literature she approved of. These exaggerations of language were not to her taste : marriage was marriage, a cross, like any other which a woman of duty submitted to without complaints, nor could a wife expect her husband, pleasant or otherwise, to fall to pieces in the effort of possession, it belonged to the things which " were not done."

I must confess that the *Obergouvernante* expressed nothing of this aloud, but the look she threw Dal'Orso and her poet cousin spoke volumes ; it needed no words. . . .

Uncle had often to receive military deputations from different countries such as Russia, Germany, Austria, Spain, etc. . . .

My husband and I enjoyed these visits. Nando from a military point of view, I because many of the officers were young and pleasant, full of go and above all quite delighted to be so well received in a country still very little known.

Of course it fell to Uncle's share to entertain the older and more important gentlemen, the generals and colonels, etc., whilst we were often asked to amuse those less high up in rank, and it even became an established habit to expect me to take these eager gentlemen for rides up into the mountains, because Uncle was proud of his Sinaia and wanted it to be seen, known and appreciated.

In those days I kept not only big riding horses but also a collection of mountain ponies ; as at an early age I had taught my children to ride, so each of them had their own mount which came in useful on these occasions, sturdy little animals up to any weight which were ready to climb the steepest paths, even with grown men on their backs. It was amusing to observe how useful I and my horses became on these occasions, and many a gay cavalcade do I remember, followed by a company of admiring military gentlemen, and it must be confessed that it often delighted me to astonish them with my daring.

On a man's saddle, dressed in my Cossack's costume, I



would lead them over paths little suitable for a royal lady. Sure of my fierce-looking Cerkess, riding well ahead, up and down precipitous tracks, I would revel in giving them one scare after another. No wonder they left with the impression that I was a rather wild if somewhat elusive young woman, "a good one to follow, a hard one to beat."

During these rides I learnt a good deal about nationalities and also about the ways of men. The Germans were beautifully polite, always a little pedantic and inclined to explain all things, even those that I knew better than they did; they had preconceived ideas about everything, which they stuck to even against proof to the contrary. Their attentions were somewhat heavy but *chevaleresque*. The Austrians were amiable, pleasant, easy-going and had the right feeling about sport, they were real horse-lovers and knew how to talk to a lady. The Russians were disconcertingly *enflammable*, ever ready to do their lady's bidding, daring, over-eager, inclined to folly; their admiration was not always easy to keep within bounds.

I treated them all in a strictly comradely fashion, and when compliments became a little too personal, I had a way of looking over their heads as though admiring the sky, which without the help of words quickly puts a man back in his right place. I discovered that the best way of keeping an admirer at a safe distance was to act as though I did not in the least understand what he was trying to tell me. This invariably took the wind out of his sails.

My love of fun and adventure and that queer touch of the child I had kept in my make-up, made me plan a funny little hut right up in the crown of the trees. This amusing idea fascinated Mr. Lecomte, Uncle's private architect, and he designed for me a delightfully original little house suspended in mid-air between huge fir trees. It can easily be imagined what a delight this fairy-story house was to my children.

It consisted of three rooms, a broad balcony and a gallery running along one side, overlooking a great depth. One of the rooms was quite a good size; I had painted it white with a frieze of huge scarlet poppies close under the ceiling.

I also found a tea-service painted with red poppies which delightfully matched the frieze. This room opened into a much smaller one which I had stained a sober green, and here I had accumulated quaint objects, such as old pieces of pottery, copper, brass, hanging a few attractive prints on the walls. A cover of dull orange, heaped up with rust-tinted cushions, was spread over a long deck-chair. The colour scheme was most attractive and of course I kept the place full of flowers. The third room was merely a kitchen in which real repasts could be prepared if I wished to spread a feast before my guests. The interest aroused by the "Princess's nest" was great and everybody wanted to see it.

This eyrie was reached by a stairway hidden in a wooden tower, copied from our peasant belfries, and between belfry and house there was a drawbridge leading over to my elevated retreat; when I drew this up, I was in a fortress and could defy the world below.

There, amongst the tree-tops, was absolute solitude, and on days of storm my snug retreat rocked slightly with the giant firs, whilst the wind, sighing amongst their crowns, was like the sound of the sea.

It was not only our children who delighted in this little house; although my absurd idea had at first been loudly mocked at, everybody wanted to cross my drawbridge and see my "nest" from within. Even Uncle, that stern man without imagination, had succumbed to the charm of my "folly," and, of all unexpected things, would insist upon my giving tea-parties there to the guests he found difficult to entertain.

Thus did my humble "Juniperus," as I called my tree-habitation, open wide its doors to all manner of men, and my beloved retreat was invaded by important and sometimes heavily dull people, quite out of keeping with the delicious absurdity of the place.

*Der Onkel* could not officially approve of my eccentricities, but sometimes, in spite of himself, he enjoyed them; he certainly delighted in bringing his guests up to "Juniperus" as it was a unique little construction, which he almost came to look upon as an invention of his own.

I kept a "Juniperus" visitors' book, between the leaves of which I had painted the wild flowers of Sinaia, and this book testifies to the number and quality of those I received, from Ferdinand of Bulgaria down to the humblest little lieutenant who was entertained on days when the great of this world had more important things to do than to let themselves be gently rocked on the tree-tops.

In former days, Uncle's only way of amusing his guests was a staid drive to Bușteni, a little townlet farther up the Prahova valley where he had, in earlier days, built a little village church of melancholy coloured stone. This modest ashen-hued edifice stood in an enclosure strewn with heavy grey gravel which got into your shoes. The only embellishment of this uninteresting place was a lean little fountain ensconced in a too regular flower-bed, which sent up a meagre and crooked spray that always looked depressed; besides, the church stood with its back to the mountains and was enclosed on all sides by nondescript houses which blocked out every view. Perhaps when Uncle erected this church, many years ago, its surroundings may have been rural and attractive, but this was a thing of the past: I believe, however, that Uncle never noticed this; to him it was still a lovely and picturesque place, otherwise it was difficult to understand why he continued driving his guests here for his so-called picnics.

A table would be erected against a wooden paling as grey as the church itself and here, followed by our numerous suites, we set out to be deliberately jovial, whilst stale ham and chicken sandwiches were handed round and Auntie bravely raved about the Carpathian air and the beauty of mountain and sky.

My tree-house came as a welcome break in this dismal habit of the Bușteni church, and henceforth Uncle directed the steps of his guests, be they king, archduke, bishop, general or minister, towards his niece's eyrie and there with my uncrushable high spirits I would serve tea in my poppy-painted cups and hand round delicacies less stale than the royal sandwiches.

My guests "oh-ed" and "ah-ed," amused, but also a little breathless, for my "nest" was perched high up and

the climb was none too easy for those unaccustomed to mountain paths.

Soon after the War my "Juniperus" was blown down in a violent storm and, being no more the giddy young princess of whom Uncle had undertaken the education, I did not rebuild it.

An old stone cross I had once placed there, now alone marks the spot to which Uncle solemnly brought so many guests.

*Tout passe. . . .*

One of the last important visitors Uncle received at Sinaia was the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, of fatal memory, nephew of the old Emperor Franz Joseph, and declared heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne after the tragic death of the Emperor's only son, Rudolf.

Franz Ferdinand was accompanied by his morganatic wife, Fürstin Hohenberg, whom Uncle and Auntie received with almost royal honour, somewhat to that lady's embarrassment, as at the Viennese court her husband had never been able to obtain for her the position he would have desired, for Franz Ferdinand dearly loved his wife.

Fürstin Hohenberg was an amiable, decorative lady, very tall and very Viennese-looking with somewhat stereotyped and conventional manners. I cannot say that I was strongly attracted to her, but Auntie, who had a pronounced sympathy for morganatic marriages, made a great fuss over her, clasped her to her heart, showering so many attentions upon her that she was quite bewildered, but her admirable manners and excellent court education stood her in good stead and she knew, with perfect tact, how to steer through every difficulty; being neither too humble nor too forward, she played her part beautifully and to the satisfaction of all sides.

Born a Countess Chotek, Fürstin Hohenberg had been lady-in-waiting to an important and very wealthy Archduchess who had many daughters to marry off. Instead of falling in love with one of the Imperial young ladies, Franz Ferdinand, alas, fell in love with the lady-in-waiting and married her in face of all opposition, and to the old Emperor's extreme annoyance.

The marriage, however, was a perfect success, and several children were born to the loving couple, who however were not qualified to inherit the throne; so Karl, the son of Franz Ferdinand's late brother Otto, was designated as his eventual successor.

Franz Ferdinand was well disposed towards Roumania. No friend of the Hungarians, he tried to take those Roumanians under his protection who were being oppressed by Hungarian sway. This had endeared him to King Carol; his visit was therefore very welcome, and we were given to understand that we must in all ways manifest our good will and satisfaction, with which we gracefully complied.

A noisy and crowded reception was given to the Imperial guest at the Sinaia station, accompanied by the usual guard of honour, cheering, speeches and over-many bouquets. In my memory it remains marked by an unworthily trivial detail. We were at the period of exaggeratedly enormous hats, flowery or befeathered constructions which we balanced with some difficulty on our heads with the aid of occasional tufts of false hair and unduly long hat-pins.

As already several times mentioned, Roumanian receptions are flatteringly warm and enthusiastic, but excessive order is not their speciality, or certainly was not in those "good old days," there was always a disconcerting amount of jostling, pushing, crushing and toe-treading, and I distinctly remember the extreme disadvantage of my large hat on this genial, but in no way comfortable occasion; it was most disastrously in the way and I was constantly in fear of its shipwreck. Fürstin Hohenberg's hat beat even mine as to size, and was in constant danger of being displaced by the too-eager excitement of those all crushing towards the centre of interest.

King Carol made us go through the usual round reserved for these official occasions; luncheons, dinners, speeches, music in Aunt's private apartment, military parades and of course the Buşteni tea-party near the depressingly grey church.

Our so-called picnic clothes, donned for this occasion, have been immortalized by a supremely absurd photographic group, big hats, voluminous veils and all the rest, including

Aunty's motor-cap and Franz Ferdinand's country clothes. A lover of beauty, I cannot resign myself to publish this hideous picture, although it would no doubt give much amusement.

In those days I was not yet initiated into political plans and discussions, but I believe that weighty conversations took place between King Carol and his guest, conversations in which my husband was occasionally allowed to take part. Important schemes were no doubt hatched, and a friendly mutual understanding was reached, which Fate was destined to destroy by events more mighty and tragic than man's brain could have foreseen.

The Crown Prince of Germany's visit to Bucarest in the spring of 1909 was a gayer business ; it, so to say, sounded another key ; it was less ponderous, more colourful and quite in keeping with the early, flowered season.

Tall and exceedingly slim, although not handsome, in his white Cuirassier uniform, polished top-boots and shining, eagle-crowned helmet, William was a goodly sight, and as he was out for gaining hearts, he was at once exceedingly popular. When on his best behaviour, his manners were perfect, and he had a charming way with the King, full of deference and attention, so that the old gentleman was much pleased with him, though he was always somewhat disconcerted by youth.

Young William had however a weakness, and this was his over-great appreciation of pretty ladies which kept his uniformed guardians in a constant state of anxiety. This anxiety was passed on to Uncle, and joining forces, William's every effort towards freedom and arranging things pleasantly for himself, was ingeniously frustrated by the elders.

To the great displeasure of the generals of his suite, he managed to get out of a visit he was to pay to Constantza in the hope of spending that day with me and my young lady friends. This pleasant little plan was, however, brought to naught by those in authority, annoyed at his refusal to inspect our sea-port, where an eager colony of Germans had been awaiting his coming with feverish excitement. Therefore, instead of being allowed to enjoy himself in the

company most congenial to him, he was marshalled about from one dull institution to another and instead of drinking tea at Cotroceni as he had hoped to do, he finally had to take it with Aunty, who talked to him about his grand- and great-grandfather, declaring that she was in intimate communion with the Emperor Frederick's spirit.

Certain concessions were however made both to William's tastes and youth, and he was allowed to be amused, not perhaps as he would have liked, but strictly within the limits of court etiquette.

A huge garden party was arranged at Buftea, the country seat of the Stirbeys; dances in national costumes were performed on the grass, and as there were young ladies galore the bright young prince was able to use his charm to his heart's content, both offering and receiving homage in a manner which betrayed perfect routine.

The garden party was a complete success, the weather was beautiful, there were many flowers, the trees were in earliest leaf. The old King and Queen graced the festivity with their presence. All in white, Aunty beamed down upon this debonair offspring of the Hohenzollerns with grandmotherly indulgence, offering him, between the dances, no end of excellent advice which he accepted with the gay good grace habitual to him when speaking to a lady, never matter what her age might be.

Uncle circled about amongst the guests, young and old, being amiable with that relentless thoroughness inherent in his sense of duty, whilst I found my private amusement in watching the silent competition between the young Bucarest beauties, who one and all had set out to capture the volatile heart of this charming prince, famous for his never-failing interest in the weaker sex.



NICKY, WHEN TWO YEARS OLD.

*(Photograph by Beresford.)*





## *Chapter XIII*

### MY CHILDREN

**M**Y children were the central interest of my life. Those of our race are passionate mothers and we cannot conceive of a world without children. All our work, efforts and ambition tend towards building them up according to our ideals, making them happy and preparing for them a fine future.

My nursery was the centre of my life, and as only my two eldest children were born in close succession, and there were longer pauses between the other four, I was able to prolong it indefinitely.

I always preferred the nursery to the schoolroom, which was already a step away from the "Golden Age," the beginning of toil and trouble, and I was not by nature a pedagogue; I was in fact always inclined to be too lenient, as I hated the feeling of any sort of tyranny or coercion, and had an insurmountable aversion from scolding. I hated being scolded, and still more did I hate having to scold. This had been a great hindrance to me all through life, especially as I instinctively realized that this aversion was in fact weakness; an inability to be disagreeable even to those who thoroughly deserved being rebuked.

But, alas, too small a dose of severity is as little conducive to good educational results as the contrary. But the extreme urge for liberty, which was the fundamental trait of my character, made me incapable of coercing others, even when severity would not only have been absolutely justified but even necessary. I confess that many of the failures, even the disasters of my life, can be brought back to this fundamental inability to scold or reprove.

With the coming of our fourth child and second son Nicolas, we left our first Sinaia home, the "Foişor"; a

delightful little house styled "Châlet Suisse," tucked in amongst huge fir trees, right up against the forest.

I had much loved this first house of our own; it was an idyllic little habitation, although the years spent beneath its roof had not been all peace and happiness, but it was the sort of little dwelling any woman's heart could love; small, low balconies all along the front and doors opening straight out into the forest. Now it had become too small for our growing family, so Uncle arranged a much bigger house for us in which there was plenty of space; the "Pelişor," which I still inhabit to-day when in residence at Sinaia.

Nicolas was named after Tsar Nicolas II who was his godfather. His advent was joyfully received by the entire country and people. Ducky came to be with me before and after his birth.

Nicky became immediately popular with high and low. He had those qualities and, I may add, also those faults which made him irresistible and easily forgiven when he sinned.

He was exceedingly independent, and always funny. He never could be still for a second; he was for ever "up and doing." Although far from good or obedient, he had a way of getting people to do what he wanted. Wherever Nicky went, he went to rule and order about, not because he was imperious and aggressive, but because he was funny. His funniness was of the good-humoured, irresistible kind which amuses even the dullest. Even as a tiny tot, his repartees were so comic that, instead of receiving the scolding he deserved he roused instead fun and laughter. Comically sly, he always had his own way, breaking down every defence or restriction. Even the most recalcitrant ladies of the "palace" were his slaves, nor could Uncle hold out against Nicky; he became the undisputed favourite who carried all before him, obtaining concessions never granted to any of us. Uncle loved him and would take him for long walks, although somewhat bewildered by the vagaries of this impulsive child, but his spontaneous nonsense refreshed and amused the old gentleman more than anything else. Nicky became Uncle's "fun," he could hardly do



UNCLE WITH NICKY



without him for a day and there was a certain kingly smile reserved only for this sprite-like little fellow who had entirely stolen the King's heart.

"Der Nicolai is wirklich ganz unglaublich," was his usual appreciation of the child: "Man kann ihn nie fassen."

And it was just that: Nicky had about him something fluid, not to be grasped, he was always escaping from, or getting out of, anything which might curtail his liberty, hamper his movements, or put him into harness.

People set out with the firm intention of bringing the child to heel, only too soon to find themselves attending to his every desire, complying to his least reasonable demand and quite forgetting that their initial object had been to try and subjugate him.

Nicky was, in fact, irresistible. He was a bonny little fellow but had a too long nose for a child. His eyes were hard, blue and compelling, sometimes almost fierce, and for a time he was possessor of silver-fair curls as fine and glossy as spun glass. I have still one of these curls kept as a great treasure in a precious *Faberge* box. Even to-day it has a way of curling round my finger as though imbued with secret life.

Nicky was lithe, agile, for ever on the move, here, there and everywhere, illusive, a will-o'-the-wisp; a joy and a torment to those who loved him or had to keep him in order.

Carol, the eldest of our children, was quite different.

As a small boy he was plump, merry and docile. Being the first, he was of course spoilt by high and low, and all the good things of this world were cast at his feet. He was the long-hoped-for heir and therefore the great favourite.

He grew up steady, rather stolid, easy to manage, and had from all times an urge towards information. He learnt to read with astonishing rapidity. In his early years he was all sunshine and good-humour, later he became just a little pedantic; his sisters would declare "Carol likes tiresome things." The truth was that, even as a quite small boy, he was unusually interested in all things pertaining to rules, laws, proscriptions and interdictions, he liked to inquire into the inner working of things; this came

probably from being a great deal with Uncle, whose speciality was to instruct. In Carol he found a fertile ground, as the boy also shared his father's and grand-uncle's passion for soldiering. He loved all things military and cared immensely for uniforms, regulations and every minutest detail of discipline and command.

At the age of three or four, he would march with a tiny sword at the head of the soldiers when the guard was changing, solemnly certain that he was in command, or he would stand in the middle of the band, beside the band-master, a little stick in hand, imitating with the utmost earnestness that important gentleman's every gesture.

Carol was adored by the officers and their men, and no end of wee uniforms were offered him by the different regiments. In these he would proudly strut about giving orders to imaginary troops, admirably imitating the voice used by those in command, sharply separating his sentences and rolling his "r's".

But this over-military little fellow was a trial to his sisters; the tyrant slumbered within him and as his games were modelled upon State institutions and military restrictions, he naturally hampered their fun.

He would for instance set up a custom-house in the middle of the corridor where his sisters were tearing about with their horses and toy-carts, he would insist upon taxes being paid, thereby curtailing their liberty and causing endless scenes of revolt and indignation.

It is interesting to watch children at their games, nothing is more character-revealing, and the qualities or faults lying dormant in each small being are almost uncannily brought to light.

Carol was all order and precision, with an underlying impulse to rule, subdue, restrict. Elisabetha, although strangely silent, was full of ardour, fantasy and imagination. She was fond of being alone; as a small child she could be very wild, then her eyes would glow, but she seldom expressed herself in words; her hands were small and strong as steel.

Exceedingly handsome even as a baby, her features were unexpectedly classical, although her face was as round as

a cherub's. Her look was straight, almost defiant, beneath well-marked eyebrows. Carol's desire to subjugate her aroused furious though almost dumb resentment.

Mignon was all smiles and passivity, she was pleased with everything, she would docilely join in with the others' games, but without ever any desire to lead or dominate. Her nature was based upon sweetness and patience, not unmixed with indolence: she seemed born to be the *souffredouleur* of all the others. She never complained or felt aggrieved and there was an almost sleepy and instinctively indulgent look in her long-shaped blue eyes. Her beautifully strong fair hair grew low on her forehead. This hair was a continual temptation to Nicky; he could not keep his fingers out of it and I remember once, when I was pitying Mignon for having caught her hair in the door-handle, how she placidly answered, "Oh! it does not matter. Nicky hurts me much more when he tugs my hair out," and, alas, Nicky was very often "tugging" at his sister's hair!

There was almost a peasant's endurance about Mignon. One could have well imagined her in a cottage, the mainstay of the family; lighting the fire, milking the cows, fetching water at the well, or carrying too heavy babies about, sweeping the floors, setting the dishes on the table. Mignon was instinctively a helpful and domestic child.

Having been born at a period when I had been very unhappy, I loved her with the love a lion-mother might have for her cub. Mignon was, so to say, the child of my flesh, I could almost feel with my own body when Mignon had an ache or a pain.

If Mignon was the child of my flesh, Ileana was certainly the child of my soul.

She came in the year 1909, and I was no longer young, life had already to a certain degree disciplined me; I was a more conscious personality, my character had ripened, I had learnt self-control and how to look life and circumstances squarely in the face. My shoulders were thrown back and I was ready to take my own responsibilities.

Her birth was a great joy to me and I was glad she was a girl. Even at the hour of her birth her eyes were enormous and dark blue.



I remember how I lay on my back, the struggle over, the new little world wanderer pressed to my heart, listening to the royal salute, twenty-one guns for a princess ; had it been a son there would have been a hundred and one. Perhaps some would be disappointed that it was not a boy, but I was not, and those guns were like the voice of my people rejoicing with me over the birth of this fifth child. Later there could still be a boy.

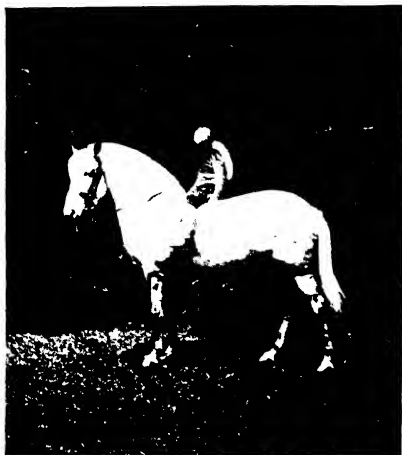
To-day I no longer resented being told that my children belonged to the country, to-day it was my pride that it should be so.

I had gone a long way since October, 1894, when my first child was born ; then I was seventeen, to-day I was thirty-five, and had learnt something of patience and abnegation and had understood the necessity of constant effort towards a central goal, had understood also that "serving" was the real object of life. We all have to learn to serve, some of us do not learn it easily. I was amongst these, but to-day I was beginning to understand, and with this understanding, Uncle's personality became more comprehensible, more sympathetic. He was not infallible, he too could err, but he was wise in most things, above all, he was earnest and entirely convinced. He loved Roumania and although occasionally unnecessarily ponderous, he had a straight line of action from which he never deviated.

Ileana from her earliest infancy had an earnestness about her which the other four did not possess. Her large dark blue eyes looked at you with deep inquiry and the child seemed to understand your every emotion with almost uncanny lucidity.

Ileana was naturally well-behaved ; Ileana, as is so seldom the case, was born with the law within her, it was never necessary to teach Ileana the difference between right and wrong ; Ileana knew. But this did not make of her a prig, she was a gay, happy child, full of life and high spirits, and when Mircea appeared early in the year 1913, Ileana loved him with motherly ardour and Mircea adored Ileana more than anyone on this earth ; more than his mother, more than his nurse.





NICKY ON HORSEBACK.

*(Snapshots taken by myself.)*

Thus we were a very happy family before the War came to tear so many things up by the roots.

I have already related elsewhere that it was one of King Carol's theories that he, not we, was to choose those who were to educate and bring up our children. Later in life I understood many of Uncle's views, and what seemed to us unnecessary tyrannies, but even to-day, with the judgment of my ripe years, I consider that here he made a grievous mistake. It gave rise to endless trouble in the household and the final result was anything but satisfactory. This, however, is one of those inner griefs that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon, but much misfortune might have been avoided and much was brought into our lives, with far-reaching consequences which in a way changed the face of history for us.

I can only say that we were not allowed to bring up our two eldest children, and with this order of things elements and influences were brought into the household which were disastrous in more ways than one.

But nevertheless I have many happy memories of our family life; some stand out quite particularly, visions of the past, drenched with sunshine, gay with the sound of children's voices and the pattering of small feet :

Cotroceni : outside in the garden the breakfast is spread under the trees. It is springtime or early summer, the birds are singing, flowers coming out one by one according to season, snowdrops, scillas, daffodils, narcissi, tulips, irises, lilacs, peonies, roses, lilies, delphiniums, and the children are running about, happy, care-free, full of exuberant life. A scent of acacia and later of lime-blossom saturates the warm air, there are bees everywhere and many-coloured butterflies. From afar the call of military bugles, many dissonances but so familiar as to become almost dear to the ear, a natural accompaniment to certain hours of the day ; occasionally a band, and then the tramp of soldiers' feet marching towards their fields of exercise. In the distance dogs barking and the voices from a girls' school not far off, singing in chorus, but always, at all hours the barkings of dogs. And on the freshly raked gravel the excited stamp-

ing of my horse's hoofs, impatiently inviting me to be off. Children and dogs surrounded me, and nurses come running in starched white dresses. "Good-bye, Mamma!" "I'll soon be back, children!" and away I fly, the joy of life coursing like wine through my veins.

Sinaia: keen mountain air; firs, all that grows here, tree or flower, is strong, upright, vigorous, vividly coloured; every breath you draw goes deeply down into your lungs, it is like drinking a draught of icy clear water. Long walks, flower-filled meadows, the grass so high that the children are half hidden in it; blue-bells, buttercups, ranunculus, fox-gloves, wild gladioli, turk-cap, lilies and what not else. Sunshine, the smell of freshly cut hay, laughing voices and, in the background, high mountains and, scaling their rocky sides, sombre armies of giant firs.

Cavalcades: the children mounted upon sturdy mountain ponies with flowing manes and tails, I leading the way on fiery, iron-legged Airship. The ring of hurrying hoofs behind me; we are going at a great pace, taking sharp corners at perilous angles, but they are all shouting, laughing, gay and feverishly excited to follow me along these twisting, curving little paths, through the great forest, over wooden bridges, never quite certain of safely reaching the farther side, as occasionally during the winter the beams of these bridges rot; but we are young, careless, count upon our luck, unafraid.

Then over the Prahova river, up the steep banks to the meadows beyond, wild gallops through the mountain flowers, the scent of feathered pinks, the sweetest of all scents, white-clad peasants beginning to cut away all this glory, and again laughter, laughter, and those children's voices so good to hear.

Back again through the forest and suddenly the pattering of rain on the leaves overhead, shouts of excitement, hurry, scurry, let's get home as quickly as possible so as not to be drenched!

Home: the sound of small feet running down the corridors, doors opening and shutting, more laughter, calls for Nana, for Nini, and leaning out of the window whilst I take off my wet things, I see the rain beating down my





ILEANA, WHEN THREE YEARS OLD.

flowers in the garden beneath, but it was only a shower, the sun is breaking through the clouds again. . . .

Constantza: the sea . . . the harbour with its teeming life; ships, sailors, the screech of sirens, different signals, the piercing note of the whistle, agonized calls from the funnels of departing steamers, the reek of tar, of ropes, of seaweed; grimy men hauling heavy weights, the colours of flags tormented by the wind, the silver shine of sea-gulls' wings, the splashing of oars, the lapping of waves against the wharves, bustle, life, energy.

Again the pattering of children's feet; this time along the decks of the *Regele Carol*, of the *Trajan*; the faces of officers, the dry smile of Captain Periețeanu, small, nut-brown, a man of few words but the children's special friend, by them christened "Pikitani," as reliable and devoted as a trustworthy nurse.

The ship's doctor with his dark beard and all-seeing eyes, also one of the children's friends, bluejackets, stewards, mechanics, hurrying servants, everywhere pleasurable excitement, always something to see; the incomparable joy of life on board, a taste of brine on one's lips and floating over all the smell of kitchen, the eternal cooking of many meals for high and low, for big and small.

Mamais: huge stretches of sand, a beach so long that the end is lost in distance. Wee pink shells like rose-leaves cast away by fairies, bathing, that particular laugh reserved for the impact with cold water, the whispering swish of waves softly breaking on the shore, each in turn leaving a snowy line of foam. Games in the sand, excited dogs tugging at heavy bits of wood cast up by the tide, or gone suddenly crazy, scampering like greyhounds, madly coursing over the beach, yelps of delight; nurses with bath towels, parasols and reproving words, and again laughter, laughter.

Slow boats moving over flat lakes, the sun pouring mercilessly down upon our heads, turning the water into a sheet of light which scorches our eyes. A small island; landing amongst high reeds, a shingly shore and then willow trees, welcome shade, but many mosquitoes, many birds' nests; underfoot the ground is grey with their dung: Ovid's Island, and in the middle an ancient water-wheel



and strange birds disturbed by our invasion rising heavily into the air ; there is something resentful about their flight. Instinctively we hush our voices, it is as though the poet's spirit were going with us through the silent groves. Overhead the wings of a giant dark brown eagle, his shadow moving slowly across this lonely place.

Back again over the lake, the sun setting in a colossal blaze, a conflagration of the skies, a *Gotterdämmerung*, every possible and impossible tint of flaming rose, orange, amber, gold, with sudden unexpected streaks of burning violet ; sky and water are on fire. Then gradually the glow dwindles, the colours begin to fade, become opalescent, mother-of-pearl, faintly yellow, dove-grey, turquoise-green, lavender-blue, and finally dusk stretches over everything a shadowy hand ; there is no more colour anywhere and our returning feet drag slowly through heavy sand. . . .

Gallops on the long beach, wild stampedes through the line of foam, snorting horses, dancing hoofs, shouts of laughter with an occasional note of alarm, wet tails whisking here and there, showers of spray drenching our clothes, and from the opposite direction, slowly coming towards us, rising like shadows upon the horizon, file upon file of peasants' carts driven by Turks, Tartars, Russians and sometimes Germans, each costumed according to race. All the Turks' faces are strangely alike, bearded, absolutely impassive, but friendly ; their women unveil for a moment so as to have a good look at us, their eyes are bright with curiosity. The little Tartar girls have their hair tightly plaited in many little pigtales which stand out stiffly from their heads ; these as well as their eyebrows and fingernails are dyed bright-red with henna, their much-washed cotton trousers have deliciously faded tints, grey-blue, mauve, mignonette-green.

Fair-bearded, blue-eyed giants, the Russians wear scarlet blouses which the water reflects in long streaks of colour. Their handsome, blue-blooded horses neigh their welcome, snort, rear, plunge, heavily pressing against their collars, almost bursting their traces, eager to fraternize with our mounts. The carts are in danger of being overturned into the sea.

And again it is evening ; the shadows become so long that it is as though our horses were walking on stilts ; sea-gulls by the hundred, weirdly shrieking their desolate call, ghost birds with the voices of banshees, and all of a sudden the moon, a white crescent painted against the sky, sending a wavering line of silver down over the sea, her reflection much brighter than her own pale face. Voices have taken on a lower key, laughter is less shrill, a comfortable weariness envelops man and beast, the moth-greyness of dusk spreads a uniform cloak over colour and sound. No more light, but before us that thin, almost absurdly pale, crescent moon.

Tegernsee : Mamma's house above the lake. Reception in the small hall full of flowers. Mamma's beaming face, her inquiries, her interest, her pleasure to greet each child in turn, some have grown, some have changed ; it is a year since last she saw them.

The taking possession of rooms lovingly prepared, everywhere flowers and the odour of a certain scent special to Mamma's house, also the smell of Russian cigarettes.

Mild scoldings, excellent meals, favourite dishes, welcoming smiles on the faces of old servants, luscious cakes, large spreads of bread and butter for tea. The garden full of white and mauve Japanese anemones and fire-colour dragon flowers, also many roses. Rain, too much rain which makes Mamma complain, and also excuse herself just a little as though it were her fault, as though she were responsible for the behaviour of the skies.

Long drives through emerald-green pastures, through picturesque villages, strong, healthy-looking peasants mowing their grass, a smell of hay but also, alas, of manure, large shiny cows grazing in damp fields—deep blue gentians growing in the swamps ; heavy clouds, more rain.

Mamma tries to educate Nicky but finds him a handful, but Mamma is accustomed to giving orders, to being obeyed. The little fellow is dressed in a bright blue, Tyrolese cotton coat and leather shorts ; on his fair curls he wears an absurd felt hat, rather the shape the clowns wear in a circus,

and stuck at the back of it, a pheasant's feather almost as long as the child himself.

"Girls are really much nicer than boys," declares Mamma and gives up every effort at subduing this unruly grandson, who runs away to disturb the chauffeurs at their work. He even finds means of mixing water with the petrol, which causes disaster, but the culprit is not to be caught, he is as slippery as a fish in water. "He deserves a whipping," declares Mamma, but she hopes someone else will give the whipping. Sometimes she considers it wiser not to see all Nicky's tricks.

In the evening, games of cards if there are guests, otherwise reading round a table on which stands an enormous shaded lamp. The doors are open into the garden, the air outside is cool, a little damp; now and again a footstep crunches the tidy gravel outside, then Mamma looks up over her spectacles; a scared bat coming from outside circles distractedly round the room, instinctively the women raise their hands to cover their hair, then out it goes again into the night. Upstairs the children are asleep in their snug white beds, the stars reflect their faces in the quiet lake, now and again a soft gust of wind rustles the leaves of the great lime trees. Peace. I am far from politics, far from intrigue, strife. There is rest under Mamma's roof. . . .

Munich: Elisabetha is trotting along beside me in a neat little costume of dark blue serge, her hair is very fair and catches the light, golden spangles seem to be caught in its meshes. We share a delightful feeling of excitement, we are going to look in at the shop windows: books, pictures, prints, china, glass, jade, and the Russian shop with its old icons, Ural stones, silver boxes and queer little odds and ends. The fur-shop; such lovely soft foxes and those deep brown sables and that tawny leopard-skin, and farther on that tempting display of scarves, veils, and enchanting coloured silks. Neither of us has a very bulging purse, so we carefully calculate what we dare spend, we must first look at everything from outside before we venture within the shops. Our feet have a special ring on the pavement, each single step seems to proclaim the words: holiday, holiday!



MY MAMMA.



Back to the hotel where Mamma is already at lunch ; different cousins have arrived, an uncle, an aunt ; the children cautiously look at each other, a year always makes a difference ; it takes time before the first shyness wears off. Plans, projects, it is so delightful to feel the world and its joys lying open before us. . . .

Langenburg : a lovely mediæval castle belonging to the Hohenlohes ; here sister Sandra is at home. A delightful old place with enormous walls and gardens planted in the former moats. A beautiful view over hill and valley, many forests and all around superbly picturesque old towns : Rotenburg, Dinkelsbuhl, Hall, Nördlingen and many another ; wonderful drives and excursions.

A quiet family life—here the children have the lion's share and Mignon is the great favourite : she feels quite at home in the castle, where I leave her for weeks with her cousins ; she knows every corner, every stone, she is friend with every servant, knows the people in the village and has a special pet name for Uncle Erny who reads to them in the evening many an amusing story.

Unfortunately the Langenburg food is too excellent, Mignon gains weight, but she is so happy, she loves everybody and everybody loves her.

A perforated stone gallery runs round the inner court, and below Nicky is circling round and round on a bicycle, he never seems to reach the point of exhaustion, and one wonders why ? Here as everywhere he is irrepressibly full of effervescent life, and establishes for himself a special freedom no one dares curtail.

Sandra's rooms are full of treasures and souvenirs of our childhood, they have the cosiness of rooms much lived in, rooms peculiar to an intimate family life. The apartment I inhabit looks right over the tree-tops down towards the deep green valley below, through which a small stream flows. Here also it rains too often and Sandra bemoans the weather just as Mamma does ; it becomes a personal offence.

The Langenburg teas are celebrated ; never were nor shall there be cakes, tarts, *Bretzeln* biscuits, sandwiches or jams like in the Hohenlohe home ; there is also beautiful

old silver, there is a real hereditary feeling about it all, well established, comfortable, for some perhaps a little dull.

Thus do different pictures rise before me, memories of the happy sides of family life, become all the more precious because we look back upon them, because our outstretched hands can grasp them no more; irretrievably they belong to the past. . . .

The invention of motors made a great difference in our lives. They contributed more than anything else to liberty and emancipation. Now no place was out of reach, and distances being abolished, all men became neighbours, which brought us into contact with many more people and made control and restrictions much more difficult.

The day was ours in a different way, for having become masters of space we could defy small prohibitions.

Quaintly enough Uncle was in no wise averse to this new form of transport; on the contrary, motors became one of the joys of his declining years. But being still under the influence of Cousin Charly who had to be wise upon every subject, she got him to believe that the N.A.G., which she patronized, were the only really good motors, which they were certainly not, anyhow in those days; and so it happened that he hardly ever reached his destination or only with the greatest difficulty, the N.A.G. being a heavy, bad-tempered machine, more addicted to *pannes* than any motor I have ever known.

This however did not daunt King Carol. He loved this new possibility of covering distances, and if his motor stopped at every hill and his ruthless German chauffeur pitched him off his seat round every corner, he simply imagined that it was thus that all motors and chauffeurs behaved and would not listen to voices timidly trying to explain that there *were* motors which climbed steep hills and chauffeurs who took corners at angles less detrimental to comfort; but Charly, the beloved, had recommended both motor and chauffeur, therefore they must be best. As the dear old gentleman never sat in any other machine but his own, he went, alas, to his grave without having known motoring under really pleasant conditions. But even thus he was jubilant over



SISTER SANDRA.





this new possibility of rediscovering his country in his old age.

Aunty was just as enthusiastic as Uncle and invested in caps more practical than becoming. She was all smiles and splendid white teeth under a peaked creation which made her uncomfortably resemble an old botanical professor out on a Sunday excursion. But we loved Aunty in these caps, not because they were becoming, which they certainly were not, but because we realized that in a way they had become the symbol of a never dreamed of emancipation, achieved by rolling over high roads which, because of health and circumstances, she had, during a long life of abnegation, never been able to explore.

Both Uncle and Aunty delighted in taking our children for long drives towards evening and we used to lend them in turn, and it was really touching to observe the way their young company heightened for the old couple the pleasure of these excursions.

They especially liked going with the children to the different monasteries situated in the vicinity of Bucarest, such as Tigănești, Căldărușani, Snagov, Cernica and Paserea. These distant communities established in lovely spots, far from the turmoil of the world, looked upon these royal visits as benedictions and now still mention with emotion the memorable dates when the venerable sovereigns came into their midst, bringing with them the younger generation.

Little by little better harmony had been attained. Age and ill-health had much mellowed the man of iron; he loved our children and through them more gentleness was shown to the parents, more indulgence, and we on our side had more understanding; and with it came a feeling of deep admiration for these worthy forerunners whose lives had been entirely given up to their people in an unselfish desire to serve as well as to lead. I am glad to be able to say that these last years were almost happy, years when a mutual good understanding pervaded our family life.

## *Chapter XIV*

### SOME FAMILY MATTERS

**I**N the spring of 1907 the country was shaken out of its happy self-complacency by serious peasant revolts. A Conservative Government under Georges Cantacuzène was in power. This government did not realize the seriousness of what was happening and the movement which had begun in Moldavia, spread rapidly and in a few days the whole of Oltenia was up in arms. The peasants clamoured for the division of the great properties and for the better payment of field-labour.

The Liberals, always on the watch, were all too ready to step into the Conservatives' shoes when on March the 10th Georges Cantacuzène handed in his resignation, and on March the 15th a Liberal Government was called in by King Carol under Demetre Sturdza, with General Averescu as Minister of War, and it fell to General Averescu's share to suppress the revolts with armed force.

The final result was that new laws were established to protect the peasants and a certain amount of ground was divided up amongst the villagers, more especially for pasture. Also the so-called "*Casa Rurală*" was created which helped impecunious peasants to buy ground up to five hectares.

Order had been re-established but certain lessons, never again to be so easily forgotten, had been learnt. The fundamental reforms, however, comprising the radical division of the great properties, were only brought about in the reign of King Ferdinand and will be spoken of in the right place.

I have more than one reason for remembering that spring of 1907, when my eyes were opened to several truths and when I began to go more deeply into the interests of my country. Much that I had not understood, or had over-

looked through ignorance or lack of perception, became comprehensible to me ; my horizons widened, I came together with more interesting people ; now I had really definitely grown up. No doubt I had ripened slowly, but this is in keeping with those of my race, and has the advantage that we hold to our ideals longer and with them to a reserve of strength for the days of adversity. Our souls keep young.

Changes were taking place in my life, I was slowly advancing towards the heart of things.

The days of acute loneliness were over. I was no more a stranger in a strange land ; many friends and acquaintances were now grouped around us. I had, so to say, found my footing ; also my interest had awakened and to-day when uncle and nephew discussed politics, or military questions, my ears were no longer closed by indifference, and by degrees I began to see the importance of their conversations and to become keenly interested in all that was vital to the country : agriculture, industry, army, internal and foreign politics, the desire for expansion. . . .

One of the chief topics of conversation which came up again and again was about the way our Roumanians beyond the frontiers were being oppressed by the Hungarians, Uncle complaining of how he was continually calling Vienna's attention to the fact that this attitude of the Magyars was severely trying his loyalty towards the Triple Alliance because of Roumania's growing bitterness against her neighbours.

But I did not then entirely understand how exceedingly important this was for the future trend of our politics.

The death of my father-in-law in 1905 was a great grief to the whole family, but more especially to his wife and to King Carol whose chief confidant he had been ever since he had left home to rule over a distant country. King Carol was without doubt the stronger character of the two, but Fürst Leopold, with his extreme tact and perfect erudition on every subject, was often able to be a good counsellor. Living in the centre of Europe he could more easily keep in contact with all manner of people and with most of the German and also foreign courts with which Uncle was no

more closely in touch. He was therefore Uncle's chief source of information from abroad. Loyal, dependable, devoted, a man of perfect honour, no one was better fitted for this rôle of mediator; he was continually smoothing out difficulties and misunderstandings and explaining away offences.

My father-in-law was a born peacemaker and because of this rare and lovable quality may his memory be for ever blessed. Sigmaringen after the death of Fürst Leopold could never again be the same, he had been the soul and spirit of the place.

Uncle had also great affection for his younger brother Friedrich, but there was little affinity of character or taste. "Onkelchen" was all phlegmatic good-humour, fond of his ease, left well alone and was not in the least preoccupied with politics and world problems. He loved a comfortable life, as private and uncomplicated as possible. He considered that "the great man of the family," as he smilingly dubbed his brother, made mountains out of mole-hills, unduly exaggerating the proportion of events, thereby creating difficulties which would never have existed had he only deigned to ignore them.

"He takes himself and his country and everything he does or leaves undone, all he says and thinks, much too seriously; he is altogether too important for every-day comfort," said "Onkelchen," and then he would smile his slow, captivating smile.

"Täntchen," his thin, active, talkative little wife, was more militant and showed scant patience with either Uncle or Aunt. Both her elderly sisters-in-law exasperated her, Fürstin Antonia as well as Carmen Sylva; I am afraid that she even occasionally called them "humbugs" and was not disinclined to be in sympathy with the younger generation when they allowed themselves to criticize their betters. "Täntchen" was very self-opinionated but not a pedagogue; she laughed with the young.

A visit paid by this comfort-loving couple to Uncle and Aunt at Bucarest in the early summer of 1909 was not entirely a success. The guests found the over-sober life with the earnest sovereigns little conducive to pleasure, and Uncle

and Aunty had the feeling that neither they, their work, nor their country were being properly appreciated.

"Täntchen" was fond of giving good advice and Aunty, convinced of her own superiority over her much younger sister-in-law, resented being taken in hand by "Täntchen," who kept explaining how much more comfortable they would all be if they did this, that and the next thing in her way instead of theirs. "Onkelchen's" chief annoyance was the secret police (not secret at all) who dogged his every step during the long walks he and his energetic little wife were in the habit of taking, although they did not consider Bucarest a particularly pleasant walking-ground.

"Täntchen" loved having chatty, easy-going people to talk to, people whose agreeable conversation dug down into no depths; she liked to laugh, to be gay and amused, so Aunty's musical entertainments, so tense with vibrant effusiveness, were little to her taste. She was always trying to escape to Cotroceni where I was made the confidante of her exasperation.

But the exasperation was not hers alone, for when I came to Aunty I had to hear the other side of the question, and listening to both parties I understood that there are certain elements that cannot mix harmoniously in spite of perfect manners and goodwill on both sides.

Aunty and "Täntchen" could never be attuned one to the other. There was perhaps a certain humour in all this for the onlooker, but I think that when the hour of parting sounded at last, the guests left with an undeniable feeling of relief.

Life has a cruel way of separating even those born under the same roof.

Towards the end of his life King Carol was often ailing; he was, I believe, suffering from an acute and complicated liver complaint which often caused him great pain but seldom kept him in bed. He had gradually become exceedingly emaciated and had to be severely dieted, which made him very weak.

He bore his state of health with the stoicism which characterized him in all things, but there were periods when

he felt so ill that duty became an arduous effort, and it was natural that he then preferred having to do with those who met him half-way and took account of his years.

It therefore came about quite naturally that he took pleasure in working with Bratianu; the eagerness of the younger man to please his sovereign was a relief after arduous arguments with old Sturdza, who was a tough debater.

I remember how once he said to me: "You'll see, my child, when one gets old it is a fatigue to work with brains too anchored in fixed prejudices and formulas. One's own brain is tired, so that continual arguments and debates are a fatigue. To-day it is a rest to me to work with Bratianu, he is receptive, he follows up my ideas, quickly understands my desires and is not in eternal opposition. He is eager to please me, also eager to learn, for him I am a 'sage,' whilst my old friend Sturdza is so obstinate, and we tire each other."

And thus did Ion Bratianu's star begin to rise. Uncle recognized his outstanding intelligence, and his masterly character undeniably indicated him as Sturdza's successor.

In 1908 Demetre Sturdza's health gave way and he resigned his position as leader of the Liberals, withdrawing from public life, and Bratianu became Prime Minister, though it was only in the following year that he was elected chief of the Liberal party. Sturdza lived for several years and died in October, 1914, almost the same date as his old master.

Another sign that Uncle was turning towards the young was that when the head of his household, his trusted friend of many years, Ion Kalinderu, died in 1913, he put Barbo Stirbey in his place, declaring that he must look ahead and plan for those who were to come after him. His successors must find a trustworthy man at their side whose antecedents would in every way justify the choice he was making; a man of their own age indicated to advance into the future with them.

According to King Carol, Barbo Stirbey was admirably fitted for this position. Of a somewhat shy and retiring disposition, Barbo Stirbey had always preferred a family life to a public one, but he was a man of quiet and practical common sense and one who kept his own counsel. Modest, but at the same time somewhat haughty and of few words,

he was not perhaps cut out for wider popularity, but those who really knew him had a high opinion of his character and intelligence. Married to a charming and distinguished aristocrat, Nadèje Bibescu, he had four daughters and lived at Buftea, his country seat not far from Bucarest, where I often went to ride in their woods. Prince Stirbey's grandfather had once sat on the Roumanian throne and had been one of those who had voted for the coming of King Carol; Uncle considered that, in every way, Barbo Stirbey was the man indicated to become Ion Kalinderu's successor.

Thus when our time came we found these two men, Ion Bratianu and Barbo Stirbey, at our side. Aunty never cared for Bratianu, but had for years been very fond of Nadèje and Barbo Stirbey.

Aunty nursed Uncle with unceasing devotion. Her own health, always precarious, made this continual care of an ailing husband very difficult; besides, their temperaments were so different that their long association had not been without storm and drama. Both had suffered in their own way, but gradually with the years patience and understanding had come to them and at the end of their lives, the old king and queen were certainly a very united and touching couple.

Aunty liked to play her part of sister of charity and continually told us about all she did for the King. She was one of those people who took an almost morbid interest in everything pertaining to health, doctors and medicine. She was for ever proclaiming the merit of new diets, new cures, new treatments, new remedies, but for all that she was an excellent nurse, and her patience beside a sick-bed was endless.

Besides the specialists called in from time to time for consultation, there was, of course, a court doctor, who had grown grey with the years. He was a military gentleman of much wisdom; he was also Aunty's personal friend and a good musician, but like Sturdza he was getting old, and at times Uncle had an instinctive craving for younger and more virile aid. At courts, however, doctors, like all else, are fixtures; there is much jealousy and people cling to their posts, and it was only owing to an unfortunate accident which invalidated the old doctor that a young man was called in; Dr. Mamulea.



Dr. Mamulea, who was head of the Sinaia hospital when he came into our lives, came to stay and was with King Carol to the very end. Aunty accepted him with open arms ; he became her great confidant and in many ways also, her solace.

We were relieved to see her turn towards so trustworthy a man ; we knew that Dr. Mamulea would never give anything but steady, well-considered advice.

This new court favourite was a blue-eyed Roumanian of the staunch, unemotional type, a man who could keep his own counsel as well as hold his tongue ; a man who unaggressively stuck to his own opinion without being swayed by changing winds. Quiet, reliable, phlegmatic and entirely incorruptible, a man who went about his own business without any fuss, he was a great comfort to the King, and was also with my husband to his last day.

Much of the peace and harmony which characterized the last years of the old sovereign can be ascribed to Dr. Mamulea's calming influence. He understood how to interest Aunty and how to feed her eager brain upon healthy principles, restraining her too irrational impulses and leading her gradually towards a soberer conception of people and events.

About this time she was enthusiastically propounding a tremendous and complicated scheme for helping the blind. She had elaborated fantastic plans for a marvellous white city where all the blind of the world were to be gathered together with their families (as it was cruel to isolate them) and in which they were to live in arcadian harmony, loving each other, listening to beautiful music whilst working at different crafts.

Aunty's dreams were large and generous and when she expounded them in glowing language, those hanging on her every word for the moment really saw visions of harmony and goodwill rising up before them and you could almost follow her through the streets of this white city her fantasy had created ; but the more cynical sneered, wondering *quel borgne serait roi* in this congregation of acquiescent sufferers.

Aunty got into inextricable difficulties over her projects for the blind. Profiting by her enthusiasm, impostors worked upon her credulity and ran her into debt. Uncle had to come to the rescue, which he did with a none too light

hand, inflicting many a humiliation upon his queen whose only fault had been to see things in unreal proportions and to place trust in people who abused her ingenuousness.

It was greatly owing to Dr. Mamulea's influence that Carmen Sylva relinquished certain activities no longer in keeping with her years, and which mostly led her to cruel deceptions and to humiliating reprimands on the part of the King.

Aunty instituted many good works, was a wonderful initiator and the most generous and altruistic woman I ever met; she lived for doing good. But she saw things on too large a scale, her plans and conceptions did not fit in with reality; her vast projects needed keeping in bounds and in the hands of unscrupulous flatterers she was lost. Constantly this meant trouble with Uncle. It was indeed distressing to see Aunty so often chastised for having been over-charitable.

Very characteristic of old King Carol's ideas of recreation were our excursions on the Danube. These were carefully planned with the idea of giving us all a restful holiday.

For several years in succession, in late spring or early summer, we would set out on our Danube yacht, the *Stefan-cel-Mare*; Uncle and Aunty, my husband and myself, the elder children, ladies-in-waiting, military followers, an occasional guest and *of course* a Minister or two, for these in Roumania are unavoidable appendages when a sovereign moves about his country or undertakes anything out of the ordinary.

When King Carol undertook either an excursion or a journey through his lands, even when recreation was the pretext, it was never for pleasure, but always for duty, and as he moved very rarely, these occasions had to be exploited to the utmost. The Danube trips were no exception to the rule.

We would steam slowly down the great stream and at every place, big or small, enormous, crowded, noisy, enthusiastic receptions would await us.

Those in rural surroundings were delightfully colourful and picturesque, but those in larger centres were often trying,

because of the heat, crush and deafening din, everybody rushing in upon us at once.

Now and then we were allowed a day of quiet, when we either steamed slowly past miles of grey willows, alive with nightingales singing their songs of love, or quitted our yacht to embark upon steam-launches or in rowing-boats, for excursions into the swamps, lakes and canals of the Delta, enchanted regions, unlike anything ever seen; dream-landscapes, all peace and quiet, solitary water-worlds full of birds of every description; wild swan, pelican, heron, osprey, egret, cormorant, duck, eagle and innumerable smaller birds of prey.

These were red-letter days, when festive attire could be exchanged for country clothes and when at last we were allowed the illusion of pleasure instead of inflexible royal duty.

Of course the Ministers moved with us, frock-coats and all, but on these occasions were divested of some of their importance, becoming less solemn and political amongst birds, fish and water-lilies.

I delighted in these lonely regions, different from anything else and imbued with the poetry of the wilds. Narrow canals beneath the shade of swamped willow forests, each tree like a prehistoric monster with its gnarled and twisted trunk; vast lakes dotted here and there by islands where royal eagles with rusty plumage throned upon gaunt trees, whose branches painted intricate designs against the cloudless sky, islands which in winter became the refuge of many wolves. Everywhere water-lilies like enormous stars, opening wide their snowy petals, inviting the sun to quicken their wealth of golden stamens. Endless armies of reeds bending like well-trained courtiers as the wash of our launch swept over their feet, then slowly raising their heads to stare after us, once more stiffly upright, but grieved because so soon abandoned again to their eternal solitude. There was something peculiarly stately about these tall reeds making obeisance to the royal launch and I kept watching them; there was such strange grace about their sweeping salute.

Our dearest companion on these Danube trips was Dr. Antipa, for years head of the State fisheries. He was a man

unusually short of stature, round, jovial and full of wisdom. Educated in Germany, he spoke German as fluently as his own language and there was nothing that he did not know about water, fishes and birds. Antipa was everybody's friend and a trip on the Danube without Antipa lost half its charm.

The children loved him, and as he was so small, they had a peculiarly comradely feeling towards him, for the number of his inches brought him very near to their hearts ; besides, he knew everything and was always ready to impart his knowledge in amusing and interesting anecdotes. Dr. Antipa was also a lifelong friend of my husband.

Although the crowded official receptions fatigued Aunty to the verge of exhaustion, no one loved these Danube trips more than she did. At the end of the day she would sink into her deck-chair and gather her ladies around her to rave about the charms of the great river.

She had amongst her ladies-in-waiting, one whom we all loved, Zoe Brangescu, a kind sweet soul, who better than anyone else seconded Aunty in all her good works, as did Marie Poener who faithfully served her for many a year.

The culminating phase of excitement was reached when from afar the visions of the beautiful Cernavoda bridge would appear painted against the horizon, looming larger and larger as the yacht approached and finally steamed under its vast arches.

Aunty would then sing veritable hymns of praise, for this mighty bridge had been one of the big achievements of King Carol's reign, a dream he had steadily worked towards during his early struggle-filled years ; for with this bridge over the Danube he connected the Dobrogea and the Black Sea with the rest of the country and also with Western Europe, thereby drawing much traffic and commerce down towards Roumania and her only sea-port, Constantza.

Always a slave to duty, Aunty considered herself morally obliged to wave continually to her subjects come down to the river's edge to see us pass. Declaring that a handkerchief was not conspicuous enough she would use a napkin, which she would endlessly flutter about like a white flag. Being cruelly short-sighted she would often continue waving

this friendly signal even to the peaceful cows and sheep grazing on the river's banks, greatly to the children's amusement.

I loved best those evening hours when after the din and crush of noisy receptions peace gradually descended upon our world ; when hands rested idly and voices were instinctively hushed. The willows became shadows and the sinking sun dyed the water a thousand changing tints for which the palette has no names. Timidly the stars appeared in a sky turned indigo-blue, and the songs of the nightingales would throb through the silence with sobbing liquid notes ; quiet hours of beauty when each man becomes as an island and keeps his thoughts to himself.

Another picture of old Auntie rises up before me. My pen is always loath to leave her : she was so many-sided, in many ways so big in spite of those small idiosyncrasies which, when you have a sense of humour, could not help making you smile. She was both splendid and absurd !

I love her memory more than I ever loved her in real life when others, for all their honeyed words, too often encouraged her to behave unlovingly towards me. But now no one can rise up between us to cast a shadow, and as one remembers sunshine rather than rain, I remember her good qualities rather than her faults.

Carmen Sylva, the poet-queen : I see her standing on the iron-bound terrace of a house built for her on a pier overlooking the entrance to Constantza's harbour ; a queer little house, erected by the engineers of the port, with rooms resembling the cabins of a ship. There she stood in her long white gown, her grey hair loosened to the fury of the wind. Carmen Sylva had always loved the sea in a romantic sort of way, and was one of the few people who really enjoyed the wind. It filled her ever-tempestuous heart with exultation and stirred within her the sources of poetical imagination.

Though they lived uneasily together, royal protocol, strengthened by habit and a mutual sense of duty, had brought about that Uncle and Auntie hardly ever separated, even for a week. But towards the end of her life, the heat of Bucarest before the yearly departure for Sinaia became more than even





WITH MY TWO SONS IN THE SINAIA FOREST, IN NATIONAL DRESS.

Aunty's love of self-sacrifice could endure, so she was allowed a few weeks by herself, near the sea, which Uncle always disliked as much as she adored it. Here, accompanied by a favourite lady-in-waiting, a gentleman and her devoted old maid, she would arrange her life according to her taste, enjoying an independence seldom allowed her.

Aunty never liked sleeping all through the night and rose at hours when no one else was astir. Thus was she ever awake to see the ships arrive or depart, by day or by night. Like a ghost, all clad in white, she haunted the terraces of her wave-bound abode, a figure become dear to those who watched beneath the stars. Here also her napkin was ever on the flutter, but she also used a megaphone through which she would call messages to the departing ships, blessing their way in those many words which came so easily to her tongue.

Constantza loved old Queen Elisabeth, the most sociable of sovereigns, also the most original. She would gather around her many of its citizens, indifferent to their social standing, and, lying in her long chair, tatting in hand, she would entertain them endlessly with a flow of never-ceasing conversation, herself falling under the spell of her own voice.

I once spent ten days with Aunty in her queer little house, which I was to inherit later on. At night I left my door wide open with the hope of awakening when she rose to see the ships sail away. Often my healthy sleep would make me miss the right hours, but occasionally she would come herself to rouse me, and then standing at her side, I would wave the napkin, whilst through the megaphone she called out her messages to the departing ships.

The wind would make sport of Aunty's white hair and draperies and the wings of the sea-gulls circling over our heads had some of the same whiteness. Their weird cries were like the echoes of distressed voices answering the Queen's farewell wishes.

Later, when the queer little house on the pier became mine, it often seemed to me as though Aunty were still standing in spirit beside me, a tall figure with fluttering white gown, the megaphone held to her lips, calling out words of



blessing to the ships noiselessly stealing out of the harbour, giant shadows pricked with light. . . .

In Roumania as elsewhere great excitement was caused by the first appearance of aeroplanes.

I remember a large festive meeting on the Bucarest race-course to see Blériot rise into the air. All Bucarest rushed to witness this sensational sight and the Royal Family went in great state headed by Uncle and Aunt, including, of course, the children, who were greatly thrilled.

It can well be imagined how this marvellous victory of man over air excited Aunt's imagination. She found every sort of poetical name for the "bird-man" who had mastered space in a way which up to the present had only belonged to the realm of dreams. She overwhelmed him with a flood of picturesque language whilst the crowd pressed around us to hear what she had to say.

Solidly planted on his thick-soled boots, Uncle stood beside her listening to her effusions, not quite certain if he entirely approved of this modern machinery, very sceptical as to its practical value. Uncle was not specially fond of innovations, but he too, in more sober language, found laudatory things to say to the hero of the day.

About the same time a Roumanian, Vlaicu, invented an aeroplane in which he made a few successful flights. But like so many others his career was brought to an untimely end, his machine coming to grief on the plains between Ploesti and Câmpina, and Vlaicu was killed. His name, however, remains amongst those of our national pioneers.

Thinking of the Blériot meeting on the Bucarest race-course I especially see two figures standing beside us, William of Wied, Aunt's nephew, and his wife, Sophie, who had been Princess Schönberg.

Sophie was one of Aunt's great favourites. Her grandmother had been a Roumanian through whom the Schönbergs had inherited a fine property, Fântânele near Băcau. Sophie had spent much of her childhood at Fântânele and adored all that was Roumanian. Her parents had died when she was quite young and Aunt had taken the orphan girl under her special care.





MY LITTLE MIRCEA.

Sophie was clever, talented and a great music-lover. Aunty considered her exceptional in every way and loved her with that complete absorption of which she was capable, submerging her with her praise, with the belief in her marvellous capacities and desiring above all things to bind this ardently-loved girl more closely to her by ties of blood.

Pursuing this goal with that relentless persistence she put into all her desires, Carmen Sylva finally brought about a match with her nephew William of Wied, her brother's second son.

William was a fine, healthy, kindly fellow, with a soft voice and a wide smile, but not having the artistic temperament he was occasionally somewhat bewildered by the atmosphere into which he was being drawn, or so it seemed to me, the uninitiated onlooker. But William married Sophie, and Aunty, overjoyed, sent prayers of thanksgiving up to the heavens.

Now Sophie was her niece and could occupy a special position at the Roumanian court. Aunty could not bear Sophie out of her sight ; they sang, painted, composed, wrote poetry, played the harp and piano together. I think they also spoke with spirits beyond the confines of our world, but this I never witnessed ; anyhow, one thing was certain, no one any longer played any part with Aunty except, Sophie, Sophie, only Sophie.

But to paint, sing and play the piano was not enough. Aunty had greater ambitions for her chosen favourite and nothing less than a throne would suffice her for this exceptional being.

Getting Uncle to uphold her idea, the Albanian plan ripened and took form, and during a visit of the Prince and Princess of Wied at Sinaia in September, 1913, Take Ionescu brought the consent of Vienna, Rome and Paris to the choice of William of Wied for the Albanian throne.

I heard much about this great adventure, as Aunty had thrown herself heart and soul into it and little else was talked of during that autumn season. Sophie was full of excited anticipation, but it seemed to me as though quiet William was a little less enthusiastic, not being so deeply moved by the romantic possibilities of this new career.

In October, however, the young couple started off for their hazardous adventure accompanied by Aunty's blessings and her passionate wishes for success. They went bravely to encounter tragic days, which ended by their losing their every possession, even the harp so dear to Sophie's heart.

The story is thrilling but too long to relate, but I shared with Aunty the intensely interesting letters Sophie regularly wrote from Durazzo. She indeed put up a brave fight and I approved of the intensity with which she espoused such a difficult cause. Her spirit was uncrushable, she showed a fine courage I truly admired, but the odds were too great, intrigue too rampant, passions ran too high; besides, the World War came to put an end to many hopes, Sophie's amongst others.

Sophie has kept her love for Albania and the Albanians: the romance of that wild country sank into her soul and still lives there; the flame of her enthusiasm has not burnt out, although Aunty is no more there to uphold her with her fiery belief. In fact, Aunty and her beloved Sophie never met again in this world. . . .

Before the birth of my last and sixth child, Mircea, I was not in my usual good health, and during the autumn visit to my mother in 1912 I had even to submit to being looked after, a fact which filled me with astonished resentment.

In January, 1913, Mircea was born, but I did not recover as rapidly as usual, being confined to my bed for three weary months by a painful phlebitis.

Ill-health seemed to me a personal insult, something that could happen to others, but not to myself. Outwardly I submitted with patience, but inwardly I was unresigned to the indignity of the sick-bed.

Because of this unfortunate mishap, I could not enjoy my last-born as I had enjoyed all the other children, being prostrate on my back, but it was a great comfort to me that Carol, who adored babies, would carry his little brother up and down my room as long as I wished, so that I could at least look at my baby to whom my whole heart went out. I always particularly adored my babies when they were tiny and helpless, they seemed to possess every drop of my blood.





During this time of trial, the friendship of a charming Englishwoman, Leila Hamilton, was the greatest comfort to me. She came to me daily, helping me through those dreary winter months.

Her husband was interested in Roumanian oil ; he was a Scotsman with a streak of mysticism in his make-up which I thought attractive. Leila, his wife, had a sweet young face framed in hair gone grey before its time. She was highly cultured and her voice was soft and soothing.

In the summer, the Hamiltons lived at Cămpina (the oil centre) where she had arranged a dear little house with nothing but Roumanian things, but in spite of this it had become quite an English dwelling with that unique cosiness and taste inherent in English homes.

There was great affinity of feeling between Leila and me ; she would read to me by the hour and we would discuss every subject under the sun. In Leila Hamilton all was harmony, and she was just the sort of person pleasant to have beside a sick-bed.

Uncle came as often as he could escape from his work. He would generally appear towards evening and, sitting beside my bed, he would tell me all about his political difficulties. It was strange how confidential he had become, all distance seemed to be effaced between us, and to-day his conversation did not bore me as in former days.

This was during the first Balkan War, and some of our politicians, headed by Take Ionescu as chief leader, were clamouring to enter in with the Greeks, Serbians and Bulgarians who were fighting the Turks.

I was possessed with a desperate anxiety that we should be forced into war whilst I was tied to my bed. The thought that our soldiers might go off to fight whilst I was invalided was torture to me. But Dr. Romalo, our family doctor, a caustic, hard-tongued little man, very devoted but very bitter of speech, so as to impress upon me the necessity of keeping absolutely still, had pronounced some rather terrible words. "Remember," he said, "to-day you have a pistol in your leg and if you make the slightest movement you can shoot it off into your heart. . . ." So I kept still !

King Carol, through careful policy, warded off war and



in March I was sent for a cure to Dax, where I had to learn to walk again. It was an exceedingly painful proceeding, but with tremendous energy I did all that was necessary to recover my health.

When the cure was over, although hardly up to the effort, I paid a flying visit to Spain to see the King and Queen at Madrid and also my youngest sister then living there with her husband, the Infante Alfonso of Orléans-Bourbon.

It had always been my dearest wish to visit Spain, and Dax being quite near the Spanish frontier, the temptation could not be resisted, and although I received no official permission from home, I took the law into my own hands and took advantage of the unique chance which would probably never again come my way.

Unfortunately I was still far from well and during the long time I was laid up I had put on much weight, which made me very unhappy. I was still lame and had to walk about with a stick, besides, because of having been in bed for months, the soles of my feet had become very tender. All sightseeing was an excruciating fatigue, but with almost heroic tenacity I insisted upon visiting Toledo, Seville and Granada as well as different places near Madrid, such as the Escorial and Aranjuez. When a child my mother had shown me views of Granada and ever since it had been my dearest wish to see the Alhambra, and certainly I was not disappointed.

Rising out of the deep, those ochre-tinted fortress walls, austere and forbidding, guarding within their heart, as a rough stone guards its crystals, that treasure of delicate architecture. All those gardens, those fairy-like courts, all that running water, those quiet pools, those flowers and cypress trees, and everywhere the scent of orange blossom and the songs of nightingales. As background snow-capped mountains, a vision of beauty indeed.

The young queen was my first cousin and we were glad to be together and a pleasanter companion than King Alfonso could not be imagined—young, impetuous, so full of bubbling life. With pride he showed me the wonderful armoury housed in an annexe of the palace, and also his splendid stables so full of every kind of horses, exactly as described

to us long ago, when we were children, in a letter from our dear Captain Maurice Bourke.

I fell in love with Spain and vowed I would return, which I did sixteen years later ! I even had the courage to go to a bullfight, which I cannot say I enjoyed, though the first entry of the bull, so full of belligerent vitality, so grandly sure of his strength, when with head held high and with snorting nostrils he defies the whole world, is indeed a fine sight. But I hated the grand creature's piteous end, and of course the tortured horses cannot be thought of !

With joy I remember the gorgeous tapestries hung round the great open gallery of the palace court-yard for some solemn religious festivity, a series of wonderful Gothic Gobelins representing stupendous sea battles, which kings and queens, robed in marvellous robes, are serenely contemplating from throne-like seats, every one of them woven through and through with golden thread.

The treasures of Spain delighted and amazed me, and after having seen the Spanish cathedrals all other cathedrals looked small. It was cruel to have so little time at my disposal and not to be in a fit condition to stand fatigue.

It was during this trip abroad that I had my first glimpse of Paris, a town which had always been on King Carol's black list ; he considered it a place of perdition, and it was only because I had to go to Dax that I was allowed to set my foot in France and its giddy capital.

Paris being the Mecca of every Roumanian, my husband and I were almost curiosities in the eyes of our subjects for never having been to this city of cities, which attracted them like a magnet.

My sister Ducky (now Grand Duchess Kirill), had a charming apartment in the Avenue Henry Martin, and this she and her husband kindly put at my disposal so that I should not have to go to an hotel.

Numerous Roumanians, enchanted to see me at last in Paris, flocked around me, everybody wanting to offer me some pleasure, eager to introduce me to some of the joys of the gay town. But *der Onkel's* impressive shadow loomed large between me and every temptation, so that it was

only with the utmost discretion that I dared accept any invitation.

I was delighted to meet Anna de Noailles, whose company I found exceptionally stimulating. We took to each other from the first. No one talked as well nor as much as Anna, and her conversation was so sparkling and witty that one did not in the least mind never being able to put in a word. I was a good listener; besides, she found in me a type that did not often cross her path and in whom there could be no spirit of competition.

My stay in Paris was all too short and soon I turned my face homewards, stimulated and refreshed, and although not yet quite my old self, ready to take up my life and duties again in the eternal old round.

But the old round was not to last much longer; soon the entire world was to take on another aspect, life's trials another shape. We did not know it, but one and all we were being rolled towards tremendous events.

I was glad to get back to my children and to become really acquainted with my baby Mircea, who was still a little stranger to me. I was glad also to get back to Cotroceni which, with time, had become a home dear to my heart. Each year we had done something to improve it and recently a new bit had been added to the original house, and this addition I had at last been able to build according to my own tastes and desires.

With the years I had learnt to understand and appreciate the art and architecture of the country, and had become the chief promoter of a movement tending towards resuscitating a national style instead of imitating all that came from the West. It sometimes needs a foreigner's eye really to appreciate the beauties of a country, especially when that country is struggling towards development. Those in the ferment of evolution are apt to overlook their own treasures whilst straining towards that which other countries offer.

This love of all things Roumanian had only very gradually ripened in me; the continual repression of our lives, the constant demand upon our acquiescent obedience had not been conducive to a free development of sympathies. Our

roads had been so cut out for us, so limited, so restricted, so hedged in with prohibition that, instead of promoting a love for the country, it had for many years only stirred up a feeling of revolt for all things aggressively national.

This may sound strange, but the prisoner seldom cares for his chains, and for many years my husband and I had felt ourselves yoked to a task, to a duty which had about it no glamour, all flavour of creation having been extirpated by that heavy demand for continual, undiscussed submission.

There may be some who can resign themselves to blind obedience, finding a certain peace and comfort in being led. I did not belong to these. The desire towards freedom and independence was so inherently part of my being that over-severe laws and limitations awoke in me a feeling of revolt. During all the long years of my apprenticeship I was possessed by a blind but vital urge to break my shackles, and with this unresigned submission to a tyrannical will came an unreasoned feeling of protest against all that was too intimately in league with my subjugation, or what I called "my captivity."

Even marriage seemed to me a curtailing of my own rights as an independent personality. I have never known the gentle charm of giving over my will into another's keeping. One part of my being always stood alone and aloof, a fortress I could not surrender.

So it was only when others began to admit, and even to respect my own separate identity, that I found joy in things pertaining to the country to which my youth had been sacrificed, my youth and with it my every inclination towards expansion and independence.

I am aware that, in confessing this, I am not putting myself in a specially pleasant light, but it is so completely the key to my inner nature that it is necessary to mention it if my life and personality are really to be understood.

Though essentially sociable and loving to be in close contact with others, though seemingly gay and carefree, even at times considered frivolous, the real inner "me" was solitary, needed absolute independence, needed to stand alone and to be "free."

## *Chapter XV*

### ROUMANIA AT WAR

ON July the 23rd, 1913, Roumania finally declared war on Bulgaria, and Bucarest went mad with delirious excitement, as for months many had been clamouring for this development of the over-tense political situation.

It is curious that a declaration of war always arouses such popular enthusiasm ; an unreasoned delight seems to possess the masses as though it were an occasion for great rejoicing.

I remember driving through the streets with my husband and how the crowds surged round our motor, cheering frantically and many even climbing up on to its steps to be as near to us as possible, waving their caps and shouting for all they were worth.

It would be difficult and too long to make a résumé of the entire Balkan wars of 1912-13, but it is perhaps necessary to explain why there was a party in Roumania so keen to enter in with Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro, when those countries on October the 5th, 1912, declared war on the Turks.

Roumania considered she had an historical right to the Rustchuk-Varna line in Bulgaria, and if she had entered as an ally she might have raised her voice, or if she could not stand for her larger demands, have at least become possessor of the Silistria-Balcic line so essential to her for the defence of her great Danube bridge.

The war party had by every means tried to coerce King Carol into joining immediately in the fray, but Uncle was strongly opposed to war and preferred entering into diplomatic negotiations with the Bulgarians, whilst he declared Roumania neutral, at the same time keeping close watch upon events and continually raising his voice, and insisting upon our national claims.

The rapid advance of the Serbs and Bulgarians came somewhat as a surprise. Uncle had thought the Turks more able to resist, but they were beaten by the Serbs at Kumanovo and by the Bulgarians at Kirk Kilisse and Burgas and on October the 27th the Bulgarians were already standing before Constantinople.

This excited the Roumanian war party to loud and belligerent manifestations, led by Take Ionescu, which caused Uncle great difficulty, as he was determined to keep his country out of war as long as possible.

At this time we had a Conservative Government headed by Maiorescu, a steady gentleman full of deliberation and of one mind with his king.

Conferences were being held in different places, in Bucarest, Sofia, and also in London, but the Bulgarians, full of their successes and confident of finally possessing Constantinople, were not easy to treat with.

A second London conference assembled in February, 1913, which finally accepted Roumania's claims to Silistria, but Russia's attitude was uncertain and gave us anxiety.

At this period Adrianople fell to the joint forces of Bulgarians, Serbs and Greeks, but suddenly the situation became tense and electrical because of disagreements between the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians upon Macedonian questions. This created a critical state of affairs amongst these neighbours, at no time overfond of each other.

On April the 26th, 1913, a conference was called together in St. Petersburg to debate upon the Balkan situation, during which Roumania's claim to Silistria was definitely recognized.

Unable to come to any peaceful understanding with Bulgaria, on June the 13th Serbia and Greece declared war upon their former ally, who had treacherously started to attack them in Salonica, and this was followed up by Roumania's declaration of war on June the 23rd. But Roumania was too late to join in with the fighting, as the Serbs and Greeks had already been victorious without her aid.

Nevertheless, our troops crossed into Bulgaria at several places on rapidly constructed pontoon-bridges. My husband had command of the troops and Carol went with him.

General Averescu, one of Uncle's most trusted generals, was Chief-of-the-Staff.

On July the 3rd old King Carol went down to Măgura and Bechet to witness this crossing of his army into Bulgaria. I was also allowed to be there. All the places he came to were familiar to him, reminding him vividly of the Russo-Turkish campaign of 1876-7 which ended in Roumania's gaining her independence from the Turks.

The Bulgarians, at the end of their tether after a ten months' campaign, put up no resistance, so our troops advanced rapidly, hardly a shot being fired, and almost immediately King Ferdinand began asking for peace.

On July the 12th our cavalry was standing close before Sofia, but Uncle, out of a feeling of delicacy towards King Ferdinand, would not allow our troops to march into the Bulgarian capital. Wise in all things, King Carol knew that certain humiliations should be avoided because of the spirit of never-ending resentment they engender.

This was of course a great disappointment to men and officers; I remember hearing both sides of the question, the military as well as the political.

It resulted in no battles, but whilst on enemy's ground our troops encountered as deadly a foe as cannons—cholera.

I was brought into sudden contact with this terrible scourge when I went to visit the troops and the Red Cross hospitals scattered along the Danube. Up to then I had had nothing to do with war or with any of the horrors inherent in epidemics. I was appalled by what I saw, but at the same time ardent desire to help alleviate the suffering of our soldiers was suddenly born within me. Something never before felt rose from the very core of my being, an immense urge towards service, a great wish to be of use, even to sacrifice myself if necessary, to put myself entirely at the disposal of my people.

I cannot help looking upon that sudden contact with cholera as a turning-point in my life. It was my first initiation into suffering on a large scale: a thing never before known, heard of no doubt, but as something far away with which I should never have anything to do. And here it was, rising huge before me to throb through my whole being

as a message sent to awaken within me sleeping forces of which I had never been aware.

Several of my acquaintances, amongst others Elise Bratianu, had gone out with the Red Cross to organize hospitals and to nurse what they imagined would be the wounded, but they had received the order not to cross the Danube.

I went from place to place visiting the sick, and my horror grew as I began to investigate the conditions in which these hospitals and barracks were being run.

I had long talks with Elise Bratianu and her "right-hand," Mademoiselle Slivici, and Elise told me I could help a great deal if I went seriously to work.

In those days I was still very diffident about my own capacities, but Elise Bratianu always knew how to put me on my mettle and to arouse in me a desire to do, to give my best.

Disobeying the order that no woman might go over the Danube, I paid a flying visit to the Bulgarian side, crossing almost secretly on one of the boat bridges erected by our troops. There, in a forlorn village, I saw sights which made my blood run cold.

Cholera brings panic in its wake. The lightning rapidity and virulence with which it attacks and overthrows its victims, the way it manifests itself, is indeed shattering to the strongest nerves.

In that nearly forsaken hospital on Bulgarian ground I found many of our soldiers almost abandoned and dying for the want of nursing and proper care. This gave me a terrible shock, especially when I realized that our sanitary organization had counted upon wounded, but was not properly equipped to meet this form of disaster. Everything seemed to be lacking, and the doctors were waging a losing battle, which brought consternation and confusion into our ranks.

This was my first contact with a horrible and deadly reality. The effect it had on me was galvanizing. Sleeping energies seemed suddenly to awaken and an irresistible urge to be of help.

There was one thing I entirely lacked—physical fear; my splendid health lent me nerves of steel. Looking about me



I felt that what was wanted was a leader, an encourager, one high enough placed to have authority, and who by remaining calm and steady could become a rallying point for those who were beginning to lose their heads.

I met Dr. Jean Cantacuzène and his assistant Dr. Slatineanu, who were on a tour of inspection. They were much horrified by the difficulties they encountered. I had a long talk with them and they too told me I could help enormously if I called upon all my energies ; being Crown Princess, they declared people would listen to me and be ready to follow my lead.

So I hurried to Sinaia to talk with Uncle, pleading my cause so urgently that I won from him permission to take over the cholera camp of Zimnicea, one of the principal points where our troops were to recross the Danube on their way home.

Carol, who had been with his father, asked permission to come and help me and he became my right hand, carrying out all my instructions and showing great personal energy and initiative. He was a good and steady worker and liked being my keeper.

It was astounding what we were able to do in a short time. My appeal to the different authorities and also to many personal friends brought me in rich provisions, so my hands were always full and I could appear everywhere as a dispenser of those "extras" unobtainable in military camps.

For such rough work I could of course only employ women ready to face any situation, fearless, selfless women who would work under any conditions. So I called upon Sister Pucci, head of the nuns of St. Vincent de Paul, a wonderful old lady I had known for several years.

Sister Pucci, an Italian by birth, was a saint in every sense of the word. She did not hesitate a moment about answering my call and bringing a goodly number of sisters with her ; we pitched a large tent for them in the centre of the cholera camp, and here these brave women did heroic work.

It would lead me too far were I to give a full description of those two weeks spent amongst our troops on that bare and dreadful field of suffering. The work was hard, the

sights heart-rending, but difficulties only multiplied our courage and energy.

Old Sister Pucci was like a mother to me. Her vast tent, full of camp-beds and rough deal boxes, became my refuge at those moments when I needed a little rest.

At first the doctors in charge of the camp met me with a certain scepticism ; they were inclined to think I should be a hindrance rather than a help. It is true that I knew nothing about sickness, but I did not pretend that I had come as a nurse ; but what I could be was a leader, an upholder, one to whom everybody could turn for help.

I had a healthy human being's horror of sickness, but I put all my pride into not showing a sign of what I felt ; on the contrary I was always there where the infection was at its climax, gritting my teeth so as to stand the sights and smells. This was indeed an occasion to show my mettle, to prove that I was not only a gay and giddy princess.

Soon doctors, orderlies, soldiers, officers and sisters of charity became my most ardent adherents ; I was never tired or discouraged, I would allow no difficulty to beat me, the harder the work the more strength did I find, and in a few days I had become the pivot around which everything revolved.

We were working under difficulties, far from every centre, the roads impossible, transport slow. The weather was trying, fierce heat broken by almost tropical rain. At times our field became a lake of mud through which I waded in heavy riding boots. Our wards were huge wooden barracks insufficiently lighted, torrid when the sun shone, wet when it rained. The invalids lay on pallets of straw, one stretched beside the other, a mud path running down between the two rows of beds. We had no mattresses and next to no linen.

An added problem were the troops who had to be isolated in neighbouring camps for fear of the infection spreading. These men could not be demobilized before each one had been examined. It was a trying ordeal as they were all eager to get back to their homes and to their fields. Here too I came in useful, as I continually visited these men who could not understand why they were kept thus, herded up together,

whilst the unreaped harvest was calling to them from the four corners of the land.

I visited them regularly, talked to them, kept up their courage, brought them cigarettes, flowers and any good thing I could lay hands upon. They began to count on my visits and the moment they saw me coming from afar, they would all rush to meet my car, with shouts of excited welcome.

These troops knew me well because I had been with them on the day when they had recrossed the Danube into Roumania. I stood on the home side shore : for hours I stood there, as they came tramping over the pontoon-bridge. I witnessed scenes of mad elation when the men, eager to feel their native soil again, actually rolled in the dust. I received their first cheers and it was my voice which called out to them the first welcome home.

This was a strong link between us.

A certain Colonel Rujinski was in command of the troops, and he became my most invaluable keeper. With Carol, he seconded my every effort. He had the right military spirit, combining order and discipline with kindness and understanding. He was ever ready to advise, help and make possible the impossible.

Very soon I also became firm friends with the doctors. They quickly realized that I never interfered with anything which I did not understand ; I had simply come to offer my help and to be of assistance in every possible, practical way ; I was a person of authority to whom all could turn when in difficulties.

Dr. Jean Cantacuzène's dearest pupils were working in a wooden construction at the farther end of the field. Here they had set up a provisional laboratory in which day and night they slaved, preparing serum and making those many analyses so essential during epidemics. The brothers Cuica were foremost amongst these apostles for the welfare of humanity. From time to time I visited them to bring them a word of good cheer, but I never remained long enough to disturb their work. I soon understood that, in a country where every sort of work is arduous and difficult, an occa-





THE GRAND DUCHESS KIRILL ("DUCKY") WITH HER DAUGHTERS  
MARIE AND KIRA.

sional royal visit is a great encouragement to those whose labour is continual and seldom recognized.

I also managed to make friends with Doctors Lupu and Cadere, two gentlemen of advanced ideas none too inclined to see virtue in princes and very doubtful about a princess being of any practical value. This attitude did not offend me, but it amused me to make them change their minds. We learnt mutually to appreciate each other, and those weeks, when we all worked together, each in his own way giving his utmost, created a link which held through the years.

Everybody blessed me for having brought Sister Pucci. Her tent became a centre of comfort to which all came when needing any special aid or even only a little good advice, because we were indeed living amongst appalling sights and much suffering.

Often, exhausted by the weight of all the distress around me, I would take refuge beneath her canvas. Seated on an overturned box I would watch her at her work, paddling about with bare feet in ankle-deep mud, the rain dismally dripping down upon the beds.

I remember her thus one day, cooking a couple of skinny chickens destined for the hard-working doctors. Her blue skirts were looped up, the two ends of her white wimple resembling sea-gulls' wings or the white cyclamen to which I always compared it, calling her and her sisters "mes Sœurs Cyclamen." The iron stove she was using steamed, the whole tent was full of dense vapours. There we sat and chattered and often we laughed, for laughter is a healthy antidote to care and keeps you sane amidst trouble and distress. Sister Pucci and I could laugh gloriously. She was a holy woman but not sanctimonious; thus could she, the Catholic, and I, the Protestant, understand each other completely, the love of others bound us together beyond the differences of faith.

There were no barriers between Sister Pucci and myself, it was as though we had known each other always; neither caste nor religion separated us, we were two human beings each in her own way doing her best.

Those days in the cholera camp cemented a friendship between us which only ended with her death.

My lady-in-waiting Mme. Mavrodi accompanied me, a

placid lady who left good alone, and also Hélène Perticari, of whom I have already spoken elsewhere. Hélène was a fearless enthusiast, worthy daughter of her father, Dr. Davila, at one time head of the Military Sanitary Service, and whose name is still blessed by many in Roumania. Though of delicate health Hélène had inherited her father's spirit, and was ever ready to answer any call I sent out to her; she was always faithfully devoted.

There are two others I must mention before I leave my cholera camp, and those two are Vladimir Ghyca and Constance Cantacuzène. Vladimir Ghyca, a descendant of ancient Roumanian princes, was by vocation a priest. Profoundly in sympathy with the Roman Catholic Church, he had however resisted going over openly to that faith because of an old and much-loved mother who would have been heartbroken had her son forsaken the Orthodox religion in which he had been christened. But heart and soul he belonged to those rare few whose urge it is to offer up their lives in the service of others; like Sister Pucci, by nature Vladimir was a saint.

With the nuns with whom he had always been in close contact, he had followed my call, offering his services as simple sanitary assistant, choosing to take up his work in the darkest of all our wards, the one we called "Hell," where the most hopeless cases were brought, where death was reaping the richest harvest.

Here he volunteered to do night service amongst the dying, unabashed, unafraid, admitting of no fatigue, allowing no horror to repulse him; a missionary in the noblest sense of the word, and with that he was a pale, frail man, seemingly bloodless and of delicate health.

Much later in life we were destined to differ upon religious questions, but we never could forget how together we had shared those days of danger and trial; it left a bond between us which religious disagreement could not completely sever.

Constance Cantacuzène, sister of Dr. Jean Cantacuzène, of whom I have already several times spoken, was quite a different type. A woman no longer young, masculine in her attitude, picturesque of language, cheerful, masterful, brilli-

antly intelligent, she was running a flying hospital at her own expense. She was always there where danger was greatest ; she had even managed to slip over into Bulgaria, where she had been of invaluable aid when the cholera scare broke out.

Now she had set up her hospital just beyond the confines of our camp and had taken some of our worst cases where they were looked after in real beds.

I continually visited her. She was a great comfort to me ; a more amusing, invigorating companion could not be imagined ; clever, witty, often ironical, she was healthily stimulating. Her robust common sense hid beneath a somewhat crusty exterior a warm heart which she took a sort of pride in concealing. It was never sufficiently known how much Constance Cantacuzène did to relieve our soldiers' suffering, but here I wish to render her unstinted homage and with it to offer her my deepest admiration and gratitude.

A characteristic trait of our Roumanian peasant is his love for flowers. It was touching what joy I could give my sick when I brought them flowers. Almost daily I had hamperfuls sent from our Sinaia gardens and would wander endlessly through our dismal wooden wards bringing flowers to my sufferers. The moment I appeared, my arms full of my fragrant offering, a hundred hands would stretch out towards me, eager for the smallest sprig.

Many would place these above their heads, thrust through their card of identity pinned against the walls, where I would find them next day, colourless and faded. Those too sick to move would lay them close against their lips or cheeks as though the cool, coloured petals brought them relief, and hundreds of eyes followed me with looks of gratitude.

I also laid many flowers on the graves of those we were not able to save . . . In the names of their mothers, wives and sisters, I laid them there, under the rays of our great Roumanian sun.

But it was not only the sick that wanted my flowers ; there was hardly a soldier I met going about his work who did not stop and stretch out his hand towards me for a rose, a dahlia, a marigold, a china-aster, which he would then proudly fasten in his cap or on the front of his tunic.



On the day when I was to leave, I asked my husband to come and we held a giant Requiem in the middle of that field which had seen such suffering but also such heroic work. The Requiem was followed by a *Te Deum* of thanksgiving because the terrible plague had been overcome and our men could now return to their homes.

The troops stood in a huge square, and everyone who had worked on that great field flocked together for this parting ceremony.

It was a sunny morning and the brilliant light fell in showers over the priests' gorgeous vestments, over the uncovered heads of the soldiers, over Sister Pucci's snowy wimple and over my white nurse's dress.

It was a moving ceremony; we had all become firm friends, and although we were full of gratitude because we could at last consider the epidemic overcome, we were sad to part, because nothing binds as firmly as mutual work.

The ceremony over, I made the round of all those assembled together in that huge square and decorated every single man with a flower, officers, doctors, orderlies, soldiers—row upon row of them so that there was no one who did not wear a bit of colour on that day of leave-taking, and as I passed along their ranks all the soldiers cheered, their young voices mounting in chorus towards heaven; but my eyes were filled with tears, thinking of the men I had seen die and who would nevermore return to dear ones who awaited them.

Several years later (by that time I was Queen) I was being officially received in a small town of Moldavia and it was Colonel Rujinski's regiment which happened to line the road along which I had to pass, and in memory of that far-off cholera camp where I used to bring flowers to his troops, every single man wore a flower in his buttonhole and cheered me with special ardour.

Once again, during the War, I came quite unexpectedly upon Rujinski's regiment; they, however, knew the Queen was coming, but as no flowers were to be had then, a small fir-twigg had been stuck into every cap and immediately I knew, without being told, which regiment it was. This

moved me more than I can say as it was a proof that there are some who know how to keep memory green.

After this tremendous experience amongst our soldiers in the Zimnicea cholera camp, I was never quite the same again.

Reality had come to me in a way I should nevermore forget, and having learnt what it was to serve, in the broader sense of the word, it changed my conception of things and roused in me the desire to be of real national utility.

I had now six children and I had the feeling that this essential part of my duty was at an end. I had not disappointed Roumania in its expectations; the royal family was copiously established, three sons and three daughters; now other work lay before me and I looked into the future, with wider interests than solely those of my own household.

I know by much that I was later given to read about myself that I have been considered an ambitious, intriguing woman, with vast plans and a desire to play a predominant part, even in world politics. I read these descriptions of myself with astonishment, because they certainly do not correspond with truth. I was, on the contrary, almost reprehensibly indifferent to politics, even to those of my country, having, because of Uncle's complete absorption in them, a horror even of the word "politics."

Everything in me had developed slowly and I had never felt the slightest desire to play a part, but I always had a great desire to be loved; to be popular with my people. This seemed easy to me, *parceque j'avais le cœur sur la main*, and being always well-disposed towards others, I could not believe I should not be given unlimited credit. My chief urge was towards independence and a mighty desire to live my life as agreeably as possible, but in my own way.

My life, however, was never really "agreeable," or free. It was at times happy, often interesting, but it was a difficult life, full of accumulated restrictions, and had meant from the first day of my arrival in Roumania a continual steering through a thousand traps and pitfalls amongst people eternally on the look-out to find me at fault and to discover complicated reasons behind my every action. What I did and left undone was continually criticized, and no one admitted that a woman

of my exuberant temperament could be completely harmless or uncomplicated.

My absolute frankness and disconcerting simplicity could not be accepted as genuine ; it would have been too easy an explanation of my character ; something had to be sought for behind my eternal good-humour and over-trustful attitude towards life and human beings. So a legend of relentless ambition was woven around me and my honest face was rendered unrecognizable to myself by the mask I was supposed to wear. People somehow preferred to see me thus.

I have often pondered over this perverting of truth, and finally came to the conclusion that, being so absolutely sure of my own good faith and excellent intentions, I never took any trouble to explain myself, nor was I careful enough of outward appearances or what I said. I let my good-humour run away with me, and when the spirit of fun came over me caution was always cast to the wind.

But in 1913 things had definitely changed and my work in the cholera camp had suddenly brought me before my people in another light.

Besides, having now broader acquaintances, more interesting people had come into my life ; I was better informed than I used to be and certain newer influences around Uncle had made him understand that I could become useful if handled in a tactful way. It was essential not to try and break my will, but gradually to develop my natural intelligence by setting before me what I could become for my country if I could learn to take myself and my duties more seriously.

So King Carol, now no longer influenced by Cousin Charly who, tired of Roumania, had found another hunting-ground, began to look upon me as one who one day might intelligently help to carry on his work. He spoke to me about Roumania, about her troubles, hopes and ambitions, no more as a schoolmaster to a pupil but as to a co-worker able to understand ; and there were others also, besides King Carol, who thought it worth while to prepare me for the years that were to come.

In the autumn of 1913 I paid my last visit to Mamma at Tegernsee. Of course I did not know that it was my last

visit and everybody adored Mircea, my baby, who was a beautiful child, although more backward than our other children had been.

On December the 27th of the same year my mother-in-law died and we all went to Sigmaringen for the funeral. Although his mother had had two slight strokes and had to a certain degree lost her power of speech and thought, this was a great grief to my husband as it was the final breaking up of the old home.

Many royalties flocked together to render the last honours to the woman who had once been a great beauty, and amongst these were the Kaiser and the King of Saxony, the latter being a nephew of Fürstin Antonia and closely attached to the Hohenzollern family. His mother, who had died many years before, had been my mother-in-law's sister, also an Infanta of Portugal, a worthy and very Catholic lady, but who had none of Antonia's beauty.

The King of Saxony was known for his plainness of speech. He had a heart of gold and was well-loved by his people; but it was not his way to "beflower" his language; besides, he spoke broad Saxon, not the most melodious of German dialects.

I have an amused remembrance of him at the large family lunch after the funeral; a meal at which those not overwhelmed by grief occasionally have a tendency to expand rather too much under the comforting influence of food and drink.

The Kaiser and the King sat facing each other on the broad side of the table and conversation flowed freely and a little more loudly than strictly in keeping with funeral conventions. But the King of Saxony had one of those voices that knew little about minor keys.

Spreading out his napkin with a sigh of content he leaned over towards my brother-in-law William, who was, so to say, chief mourner and exclaimed in a cheerful tone: "Well, William my boy, it's a good thing your church ceremony did not last any longer or your mother would not have been the only corpse!" This was an allusion to the freezing temperature of the family crypt.

William, taken aback, stuttered some sort of reply, and

looking at my husband, I saw how he was hovering between amusement and righteous indignation. But, nothing abashed, the jovial gentleman now turned towards his imperial colleague and began asking him questions in a bantering tone, his voice ringing through the hushed chamber.

The Kaiser was going from Sigmaringen to Austria to shoot with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and the King of Saxony was interested in every detail and finally inquired what the Kaiser intended to wear in the evening during his visit, plain clothes or uniform. The Kaiser demurred for a moment and then voted for uniform. "Right you are!" exclaimed the cheerful guest. "Right you are, because you look hideous in plain clothes!"

Such was this outspoken king of whom it is said that once, after the revolution, when travelling through what had formerly been his land, he was asked by his ex-subjects to show himself at the window of his carriage.

Acceding to the demands of the people, he looked down with a grin upon the cheering crowd beneath him and called out: "Well, I must say you are a fine set of Republicans!"

After the World War William of Hohenzollern's two twin sons married two of the King of Saxony's daughters, their second cousins.

## Chapter XVI

### PRINCE CAROL

CAROL was growing up and I somewhat anxiously watched his progress. I distinctly had the feeling that all was not well with him.

Uncle's mistaken ideas about being the only one qualified to choose those who were to educate our children (especially the two eldest) for several years imposed a queer little Swiss tutor upon our household. This inconspicuous little man had been selected with much to-do, after *reifliches Ueberlegen* and according to careful recommendations of people whom Uncle trusted. That he was a Swiss seemed to Uncle, who admired the Swiss, a guarantee of virtue and perfection.

I will not speak ill of the unfortunate; the man has suffered, and finally went to pieces with remorse, but not before having done much harm.

Monsieur Z. was a problem to us from the beginning, he periodically filled me with exasperation or pity. Alas, with me, pity was always strongest; but in this case pity was almost a crime. But I had learnt so much patience that I imagined that here also patience might win the day. Besides, Z. had almost lovable sides to his character; he was a passionate botanist and a great lover of Nature, and could show extreme attachment to man and beast.

The truth was (but we only discovered this later) Z. was neuropathic, and added to this he had pronounced socialistic ideas. Outwardly he seemed humble and harmless enough, but inclined to fits of melancholy and misanthropy he was ever frequently an intolerable wet blanket at our board, and little by little we noticed that he was alienating Carol from us. The boy always wanted to be alone with his tutor and would no longer enter into any of our family fun.

My husband and I were not without apprehensions; we

had an uncanny feeling, but we could not understand what was really going on. Carol did not speak much, but we guessed that Z. was filling his mind with disturbing doubts, especially about being a prince and a soldier, also that he was confusing him about religious questions; in fact that Z.'s influence upon our son was not quite healthy or satisfactory.

But Uncle, having chosen the perplexing gentleman, was loath to admit that he had been ill-advised and treated our complaints as ill-will on our part against one he had so carefully selected. Uncle, not living under one roof with Z., never saw him at his worst. When he appeared at H.M.'s table, his attitude was so humble and unpresuming that the real character of the man could not be recognized.

Only our two doctors, Romalo and Mamulea, saw more clearly; Z. was a pathological case, but had that strange power over Carol's mind which is sometimes given to the unhinged.

There is no doubt that my husband and I were *too* patient and in this case reprehensibly submissive to Uncle's decrees. Z. ought never to have been left as sole companion of a young boy on the brink of life.

However, our every cry of warning was nipped in the bud by Uncle, who declared he wished Z. to remain, in spite of the trouble he was to us, and Auntie declared that one so well versed in the Bible must be a good and holy man.

It was the doctors who finally opened King Carol's eyes, but the harm had been done. Z. was sent away, but too late.

I now realized that what above all Carol needed was a complete change of atmosphere and I inspired Uncle with the idea that our son ought to be sent to Potsdam, to the same regiment where his father and uncle had served, for I had the feeling that Carol must be taught the real meaning of discipline and order in a place where he was of no paramount importance.

It is strange that I, the Englishwoman, was the one who proposed this to the two Hohenzollerns. Uncle, so stern in general, was incomprehensibly lenient in all that concerned our children. Here his severity, and even his usual sagacity, seemed to give out; besides, he and my husband were so disconcertingly slow, even when there was really no time to

lose. Carol had reached a stage when he needed to be taken firmly in hand.

My proposal, which had at first taken the King and the Prince by surprise, was finally considered logical and practical, and in January, 1914, Carol was actually sent to Potsdam to serve for a time in the well-known Erste Garderegiment.

General Perticari, a very intelligent man, former A.D.C. of King Carol, was attached to our son, and with them, to keep house for both, went Hélène, the general's wife, who had been my friend from almost the first day of my arrival in Roumania.

Hélène had been, and still was, an out-of-the-way good-looking woman, tall, with red hair and large, wide-open eyes under beautiful arched eyebrows. Much younger than her husband, who had married her for love, he was still very proud of her, but Hélène was one of those who always gave more than she received. Passionate in all she did, she took over this new charge with the enthusiasm she put into everything in life. Hélène was so rich of heart that she always offered more than others were ready to take and this made of her life a series of almost tragic disappointments. She was many-sided, gay, extremely well-informed and a great patriot. She had stuck to me through good days and bad, always pouring from her an inexhaustible wealth of affection that no disillusionment or disappointment was ever able to dry up.

Carol seemed to take kindly to his new surroundings and in the spring of 1914 his father and I went to pay him a visit on our way to Russia.



## Chapter XVII

1914: NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC

IT is necessary for future events that I should here mention that, in the last years of his reign, King Carol's politics, which had been exclusively on the side of the Triple Alliance, underwent certain changes.

I unwillingly bring in politics, but we were advancing towards tremendous upheavals, so that it is not possible that I should not try and explain in my own modest way how Roumania gradually turned from the Triple Alliance to the Entente. Later on I had something to do with this, but it is only fair to myself and others that I should reach back a little to relate how it all began.

Roumania was *de facto*, though it was not officially admitted, the fourth in the Triple Alliance. I cannot remember when the first understanding was come to nor the first pact signed, but I know that in 1914 it was renewed.

Uncle's deepest convictions made him absolutely loyal to this treaty, which he considered beneficial to his country although it was never publicly acknowledged, or really officially known. Whenever Uncle changed his government, he would confide this treaty, under the promise of secrecy, to his Prime Minister of the moment.

There are, however, few who know how or even care faithfully to keep a secret, and though not officially confirmed, most of the political world knew, or anyhow guessed, that Roumania was a fourth in the Triple Alliance.

Uncle's loyalty towards this secret, and yet not secret enough, treaty, was increasingly put to the test owing to difficulties and conflicts constantly encountered because of Austria-Hungary's behaviour towards the Roumanians living beyond our frontiers.

Up to the present, Roumania's chief resentment had been

against Russia, whom she looked upon as an oppressor and false friend ever since the Turkish War of 1876-7, when Russia called upon Roumanian military aid when fighting the Turks. Roumania had efficiently assisted the Russians at a critical moment with her small but valiant army; but instead of reaping the reward she deserved she had been despoiled by her mighty neighbour of certain parts of Bessarabia, thickly populated with Roumanians. The compensations received in the Dobrogea had not healed Roumania's wounds.

This resentment against Russia had for several decades been so strong that the Transylvanian-Bucovinean question had lain dormant. *Russia* was the chief foe and danger.

Unfortunately for the Triple Alliance, Austria-Hungary had two faces, the German and the Magyar; the latter was hated by the Roumanians. In spite of repeated warnings sent by King Carol to Vienna, the persecution of our people under Hungarian sway never lessened and this filled Roumanian hearts with bitterness. Besides, Hungary invented every possible economic and administrative chicane against our country and was insufferable on the Danube question, so important to us but too lengthy to relate here.

The long and the short of it was that, little by little, Uncle found himself facing an ever-increasing feeling against Hungary, which made the old resentment against Russia gradually pale before this new cause for complaint.

King Carol's appeal to Germany, as chief ally, to bring pressure to bear upon Hungary, had little or no success. The Hungarians disliked the Germans almost as much as the Roumanians and behaved just as ruthlessly with the Germans (Saxons) living in their territories.

France and Russia, continually on the watch, were naturally well aware of all this and began a clever propaganda on their side so as to weaken Roumania's loyalty towards the Central Powers. France, always loved by Roumania, was well to the fore, Russia being careful not to show her face too soon.

In spite of all this, King Carol did not budge an inch from his loyalty, though he watched with anxiety the consequences of the German blunderings. Having gained almost entirely the Roumanian market and being also finan-

cially closely bound up with Roumania, perhaps Germany felt over-sure of her ally.

Curiously enough it was in Berlin, under Kiderlen-Wächter's rule at the Foreign Office (the one-time German Minister in Bucarest), that Uncle found the least hearing, and this, into the bargain, at a period when an entirely Germanophile Government was in power. This roused a feeling of pained resentment in Uncle and I remember his speaking about it more than once to my husband; but in those days I did not understand the importance of what I heard.

King Carol let Berlin know that his loyalty was being sorely tried and that, if Berlin allowed Austria-Hungary to become the chief leader of the Triple Alliance, he would no more be able to guarantee what would happen in Roumania, as Austro-Hungarian politics in the Balkans were entirely selfish, continually running counter to Roumanian and Serbian interests, thereby creating serious danger for the future.

Personally, Uncle had more sympathy for the Serbs than for the Bulgarians, as he had no great faith in King Ferdinand, whom he considered untrustworthy.

Entirely conscious of how the Franco-Russian propaganda was gaining ground in his country, he made every possible effort to open Berlin's eyes, but although this warning came straight from the Head of State himself, Berlin paid little attention, whilst the opposite propaganda was progressively undermining German prestige in Roumania.

Deeply offended that his voice found so little echo in Berlin where he had been accustomed to be listened to, and feeling that he was being slighted by the allies to whom he had been so faithful, King Carol began to let things go and set up no further active opposition to the Franco-Russian propaganda which continually gained ground, the Transylvanian question finally completely overshadowing the Bessarabian.

One of the things Uncle also most specially resented was that the German Ministers at Bucarest were changed without preliminary warning. He had been accustomed to the Wilhelmstrasse showing him respect, but during Kiderlen-Wächter's rule this polite habit was ignored and King Carol

was especially upset by the sudden recalling of Dr. Rosen, who had grasped the Near East situation thoroughly, understood the King of Roumania's wise politics and was a help in every way. The Balkan questions were intricate and easily explosive, and it was a mistake to replace a well-informed and approved Minister by an uninitiated outsider at a moment when a crisis was at hand.

My part in this new orientation of politics is supposed to have been predominant even then, but this does not correspond with the truth. I was in those days still an absolutely negligible quantity and would never have dreamed of having a political opinion of my own. Others may have had their eyes upon me as a factor for the future, but if they did, I was completely unconscious of their machinations.

My sympathy for Russia was purely sentimental, I being much attached to my Russian relations, and I was often pained when I realized how much my husband and his uncle disliked and mistrusted this, my mother's country.

It is true that I had never felt German but English, though much of what was German was sympathetic to me, and that I was always eager to promote any understanding between England and Roumania ; but England never showed any particular interest in my adopted country, which I often regretted.

When the idea of a marriage between our son, Carol, and Olga, the eldest daughter of the Tsar, was proposed, I was more against than for it, because I feared that uncanny illness (hæmophilia) which the women of certain families are supposed to give to their sons. I knew that poor Alix had given this illness to her heir, and I dared not face such a risk for our family. Gladly would I have welcomed one of Nicky's daughters had it not been for this, as, besides the ties of affection, it was a most flattering proposal, especially as it had been brought forward from the Russian side. But when we were asked to pay a visit to Tsarskoye Selo and to bring our son with us, Uncle, as well as my husband and myself, considered it ungracious to refuse ; besides, I was always keen to go to Russia.

Our first *étape* was Potsdam, to visit Carol in his temporary

home, which was being so lovingly and efficiently run by Hélène Perticari.

It can easily be imagined with what joy she received us and how she did everything to make us comfortable. I still remember a lovely dinner-table she arranged for us, one mass of double pink and white tulips, the stalks of which had been dipped into some sort of dye so that the leaves had become copper-coloured; I am generally averse from any improving upon nature, but for once this was really a lovely result and most artistic.

Carol seemed contented at Potsdam and had taken kindly to the military atmosphere; besides, he had the pleasure of having as a friend his cousin Friedel, elder of the Hohenzollern twins, who was serving in the same regiment.

Friedel was a wee, earnest little fellow made adamant by marvellous royal principles as to duty and obligations, which nothing could sap. He and I, since his early childhood, were firm and special friends, and he greeted me with enthusiasm, delighted to see me at Potsdam and, knowing my love for horses, showed me with pride a fine grey he had just bought which immediately on the day of my arrival I had to visit in its stables.

Potsdam is an ideal ground for riding, being all sand, and the Crown Prince, though just then absent, had arranged that I could ride his horses. He had a fine stable and also all his horses were greys, as he was commander of the Death's-Head Hussars who were entirely mounted on grey or white horses.

So I enjoyed splendid gallops on the sandy Potsdam ground proudly mounted on one of William's thoroughbred greys, but it was his brother, Eitel Friedrich, who was my riding companion, a most amiable and kindly cousin, but a heavy-weight. Afraid not to be able to follow my proverbial pace, he had a second horse to meet him half-way.

I enjoyed revisiting Sans-Souci and the Neues Palais with its fine park, just then a mass of crocuses sown in coloured squadrons of violet, yellow and white. I was struck by the huge progress gardening had made in Germany.

Before we continued on our way to Russia, Kaiser Wilhelm asked us to spend a few days with him at Berlin.

Of course my mighty cousin had heard of the Russian marriage project. Although he mostly professed a certain contempt for Roumania, I am not sure that he was pleased to see the trend of her politics and sympathies towards his enemies, although at that time I do not think he knew how much disliked he was. *He* had no ill-feelings, he was only too sure of himself, of his might, of his *Deutscher Gott*.

The Empress was absent and this made the atmosphere less stiff and official, and William was a more cheerful host than Augusta Victoria ; besides, he happened to be in excellent humour and took the trouble to be hospitable and amiable. He even went as far as to talk to me as though I really existed, which he had never done before. Whether this was for political reasons, I do not know, but I prefer to imagine that it was because he was enjoying my company as, undeniably, I was enjoying his. I certainly found him most interesting and entertaining.

He had the unusual quality of being able to describe things and people correctly and in detail. When I asked him about Emperor Nicky's daughters, whom he knew quite well, I discovered he was one of the rare people who could put others before you as they were, make a real picture of them.

Most people have a conventional, stereotyped way of describing others, but I immediately saw that William really knew these girls he had often met whilst cruising in the Baltic Sea, and that he had studied their different characters and knew the peculiarities of each.

Conversation at meals was gay and animated and my husband looked pleased. Being over-modest and shy, Nando could seldom create an atmosphere, but he felt hurt when William treated him with indifference.

Whilst we were there, the Kaiser was to open an enormous new library which had just been completed according to his plans and desires. I think the central hall was supposed to have one of the largest domes in existence and to be a marvellous feat of architecture. He asked us to take part in the official ceremony, and as the Empress was not there, it fell to my share to walk arm-in-arm with him in the solemn procession through this magnificent building.

I am grateful that this occasion was offered me to see, I may even say to *feel*, Kaiser Wilhelm in all his Prussian glory, during a ceremony when he expanded in an atmosphere profoundly congenial to him and characteristic of truly German achievement.

“Es ist erreicht” : the celebrated words with which the Kaiser’s moustache-holder was then being boomed in numerous advertisements was written large over this festivity.

*Es ist erreicht.* It has been achieved ! I felt that this was really Emperor William’s Germany, something which had been moulded according to his taste and the ideal he was reaching out for. This colossal building stood for success : huge, solid, somewhat flashy, somewhat too splendid, too new, but an attainment, mighty, audacious, with a touch of aggressiveness about it, almost a challenge in fact.

As I solemnly walked down the great hall beside my cousin, I felt rather as though I was on the stage ; the grand entry in *Tannhäuser*, or *Aida*. The Kaiser was in his white Cuirassier uniform, a martial figure with his upturned moustache, head held high, his sword and spurs clinking as he strode. Like a many-coloured avenue of well-grown trees, two rows of uniforms lined our way and too-long, too-loud silver trumpets were being sounded as if for the last Judgment over our heads by too-tall buglers.

The din was tremendous ; but William was enjoying himself, and because his enjoyment was contagious, I, too, was enjoying myself as a child revelling in a splendid show.

Too tall to be real were also the white-clad officers who stood rigid like statues behind the red velvet chairs we had finally reached. Bold and upright sat my triumphant kinsman, his field-marshal’s staff held like a sceptre on one knee, staring around him with the gaze of a conqueror.

*Es ist erreicht !* And looking at him, suddenly in some inexplicable way I found myself in sympathy with him. Something rose from my deepest depths, a queer feeling of understanding for all men, good or bad, big or small, imposing or absurd, real or only pretending to be real. I felt a kindly comprehension for this self-satisfied monarch who had achieved an ideal.

He was splendid in his own showy way, but to me, at

least, also somewhat pathetic, as all human creatures are pathetic in their eternal pursuit of an ideal which generally retreats as they advance.

But at that hour William had *achieved*; he personified that which he desired, and I felt towards him somewhat as I had felt in former days towards my small son when he considered himself a conqueror because he was brandishing a toy sword. Luckily there are hours when occasionally some man touches his ideal, be it only for a fleeting instant. I could feel at that moment in my very bones William's proud content, and because of this I was able to rejoice with him. In his own special, spectacular way, at that time Kaiser Wilhelm *was* a success.

Let those who do not care to understand what I mean, smile ironically, but some perhaps will *feel* what I have tried to say. . . .

The contrast between Berlin and Tsarskoye Selo was great.

Here we had reached another world; the world Nicolas II, and Alexandra his ill-fated empress, had created for themselves as the years advanced. Not in sympathy with the outward world, they had almost entirely shut themselves off from society and even from their own kith and kin.

The outward pomp and show of power was still there, glittering palaces, guard-regiments, wild-looking Cossacks on constant patrol. But all this ended at the front door, and stepping over the threshold you entered suddenly into a quiet family life, uniform, exclusive and rather dull: father, mother, son and daughters, sufficient unto themselves.

Strongly attached since childhood's days to my mother's people, I arrived at Tsarskoye full of eager anticipations, though neither my husband nor my son joined in my elation.

Nicky was as I had always remembered him, welcoming, sympathetic, full of quiet charm. There was something mild, gentle, somewhat hushed about him and his eyes had a kind, almost a loving look. His voice was low, caressing, a little muffled, and he always seemed glad to see you. From Nicky one never felt estranged, but neither did one get any nearer. He seemed to live in a sort of imperial mist.



With Alix it was different. There had always been something strained about her. I thought that perhaps this attitude was reserved for me personally, but I soon discovered that I was no exception; she behaved almost identically to most of her relations. She had no warm feeling for any of us and this was of course strongly felt in her attitude, which was never welcoming. Some of this was no doubt owing to shyness, but the way she closed her narrow lips after the first rather forced greeting, gave you the feeling that this was all she was ready to concede and that she was finished with you then and there. Because of this it was very difficult either to start or keep up a conversation.

She managed to put an insuperable distance between her world and yours, her experiences and yours, her thoughts, her opinions, her principles, rights and privileges. She made you, in fact, feel an intruding outsider, which is of all sensations the most chilling and uncomfortable.

The pinched, unwilling, patronizing smile with which she received all you said as if it were not worth while answering, was one of the most disheartening impressions I ever received. When she talked, it was almost in a whisper and hardly moving her lips as though it were too much trouble to pronounce a word aloud. Although there was little difference in age between us, she had a way of making me feel as though I were not even grown up!

Nothing was more depressing than sitting at her table. She never tasted any of the food put before others and had separate dishes served for herself, cooked with monastic simplicity.

Nicky and his children, on the contrary, had healthy appetites and he liked to see me enjoy all the dishes I had delighted in as a child, including the uniquely excellent court sweets.

The Imperial couple lived so entirely for themselves, shut away from the outside world, that, although my mother and sister were both at St. Petersburg, neither of our hosts ever thought of inviting them whilst we were there. In former days the Imperial Family had come together on all occasions, and I found it difficult to get accustomed to this new order of things.

Much had changed in Russia and a feeling of dissatisfaction lay over all things. Tsarskoye Selo seemed to sleep, but beneath that sleep lay something uncanny which we sensed without being able to explain it.

But Ducky, when she came to me, told me many things, and then Mamma and also all the other members of the family, and little by little I understood that Tsarskoye Selo was looked upon as a sick man refusing every doctor and every help. And it was always Alix's name which was mentioned as the chief stumbling-block.

And of course also the name of Rasputin was on every lip.

I liked the girls, they were natural, gay, pleasant and quite confidential with me when their mother was not present; when she was there they always seemed to be watching her every expression so as to be sure to act according to her desires.

I studied each of them in turns. Olga was not pretty, her face was too broad, her cheek-bones too high, but I liked her open, somewhat brusque way. Tatiana was taller and more handsome, but also more reserved. It is said that she was most like her mother in character and that there was a special understanding between them.

Marie was shorter and plumper; she had very fine eyes and a pleasant expression, but a too broad mouth somewhat marred an otherwise pleasing face. I was not much attracted to Anastasia, she had no particular sort of face, and I do not know why, but I would have said that she was rather shy and watchful. But this may have been only an impression. I was never with them long enough really to know them intimately.

Neither Carol nor Olga showed any sort of desire towards becoming more closely acquainted and I felt rather shy about this part of our "mission," as I understood that by the general public, who longed to see one of their grand duchesses marry a future heir to a throne, something was expected of us. But in this closed palace atmosphere, where nothing was discussed and from which the outer world seemed so carefully excluded, it was a problem

how to bring about a conversation leading up to personal topics.

However, I felt it was necessary to have a talk with Alix. Having discussed the marriage plan with my husband, we decided that it might appear rude if we left without having made the advances politically desired, as it is generally considered proper for the young man to do the proposing.

One day, therefore, after lunch, I asked if I could see Alix alone, so she took me into her boudoir and there I very frankly told her I was at a loss to know what to do.

In all fairness towards Alix, I must say that on this occasion she did not make conversation difficult and talked very quietly, like a reasonable mother.

We agreed with each other that neither of us could make any promises in the name of our children, that they must decide for themselves. The only thing we could do would be to create occasions when they could meet, which would certainly not be easy as our lives were lived so far apart. Alix was as pleasant as was possible for her, but I quite realized that these "occasions" for meeting would never come about, as it did not in the least look as though our son or their daughter were attracted to each other, nor were we either of us the sort of parents who would press marriage upon our children if they felt any distaste.

Smilingly we agreed that we felt entirely incapable of influencing Fate, that, in fact, we had no idea how such things were done. At that hour we were simply two mothers, mutually relieved that we "had had it out." I felt that I had done my duty, the rest was in the hands of Fate.

I much preferred the company of the girls to that of their mother. They considered me "a good sport" and I remember putting on high rubber boots and splashing with them through melting snow. They took me for walks in the park and also to see a beautiful church their parents had helped to build close by, for the garrison, I believe. I adored this church, Feodorowski Sobor; it was a veritable enchantment to me. It was Russian at its most Russian and mystic, and my mother's blood made me strangely responsive to this style, or was it purely my love of art?

I cannot say, but with difficulty I tore myself away from this mellow-tinted and mysterious house of prayer. The girls were delighted to witness my appreciation, as they were very proud of this lovely building so full of holy treasures.

Being still in deep mourning for my husband's mother, we were unable to take part in any social festivities though the whole of St. Petersburg opened wide its arms to us ; but there was a parade in honour of the Crown Prince of Roumania on the vast square before the Winter Palace, and once, seated behind Nicky in his box near the stage, so that I could see without being seen, I witnessed one of the celebrated Russian ballets at the court theatre.

The Tsar appeared now very rarely in his capital, and the Empress, almost a confirmed invalid, hardly ever went with him ; he was therefore generally accompanied by his two eldest daughters. The public was still very loyal and I was deeply impressed when the whole house rose like one man at the entrance of their Sovereign and the entire public, high and low, struck up in chorus the National Anthem, of all anthems the most solemn and thrilling. Sung thus by several hundred voices it sent a tremor right through you and made your heart beat.

During the *entr'actes* many members of the Imperial Family flocked together to greet the Emperor and his guests. I was delighted to see my different relations again and also to make the acquaintance of several young cousins who had grown up since I had last been in Russia. There seemed to be a whole flock of them.

Of course, we also politely made our round of family visits, in the first place to Aunt Minnie, the Dowager Empress, with whom my mother was living, and to smart and amiable Aunt Miechen, now a widow since Uncle Vladimir's death a few years previously, but still keeping open house, receiving all manner of interesting people ; and above all it was a delight to go to Ducky's house, which she had arranged beautifully and which was filled with innumerable treasures, amongst others a superb collection of jade.

Ducky had perfect taste and the same passion as I have for arranging her rooms in a rather unusual and uncom-

mon way. But she complained of the want of light and of the endlessness of the St. Petersburg winters, where the days are so cruelly short.

Her two little girls, Marie (called Mashka) and Kira, were two splendid children, well-grown, solid, with lovely hair and perfect skin and as superlatively groomed as English ponies. They had everything on earth of which human children could dream and were flatteringly glad to have me in their midst.

Finally we took leave of Tsarskoye Selo. I was sad to say good-bye to Nicky; a unique and not easily definable charm emanated from this quiet, almost inconspicuous little man who was the last Tsar of all the Russias. I can never think of him without emotion; he deserved a better fate.

To part from Alix was not difficult, she made leave-taking quite easy. Her life was like a closed chamber, peopled with strange imaginations and still stranger individuals, into which no outsider had entry. No fiery sword at the gates of the Garden of Eden could have been more forbidding than her tight-lipped smile which brought two unwilling dimples to her cheeks, dimples completely out of place in so austere a face. No, it was no grief to leave Alix. . . .

We spent a few more pleasant days at St. Petersburg in Aunt Miechen's hospitable house, seeing all those who had not dared approach Tsarskoye's solitude, had not dared intrude into that mysterious centre where somewhere in the shade Rasputin held his fatal sway: I never saw Rasputin.

And then we left and returned home.

I have not as yet spoken about my writing. It began thus:

Even as a child I possessed a vivid imagination and I liked telling stories to my sisters, when at night we all three lay in our small beds, side by side. Later it was to my children that I told my stories, and as I ripened the stories ripened with me and even my growing up children liked to listen. Out of the wealth of the visions that floated before my brain, I built up my tales. They were nearly always fantastic and my imagination was so vivid that I

could conjure up marvellous places and wonderful people, sometimes heroic, sometimes grotesque or funny, and their lives were a mixture of pathos and absurdity, but through it all ran a strong strain of idealism, a touch of the romantic.

Beauty played a great part. Beauty in every form attracted me, and so distinctly did I see what I was relating that I made my listeners wander with me through marvellous castles and gardens, through waste lands and up high mountains, upon lone sea-shores, also to terrible places where the four winds met. Then one of my children said to me: "Mamma, you ought to write all this down, it is a pity to allow so many beautiful pictures to fade away; you ought to hold them fast, there are few who can make others follow them into such strange and prodigious worlds; you are made for writing fairy-tales." Fairy-tales! There was magic in the word. I had always loved fairy-tales, legends and old ballads, the queerer, the more uncanny, the better. I loved the Scotch and Scandinavian Sagas and all the heroic romantic tales of the past. Fairy-tales, legends. . . .

I closed my eyes and saw all the manifold people of my imagination stirring before me, all the colours, all the flowers, all the beauty; there was no end to them, it was a tremendous store of wealth, inexhaustible, endless. . . .

So I began to write fairy-tales. They were not wonderful literature; I knew nothing whatever about writing, about style or composition, or about the "rules of the game," but I did know how to conjure up beauty, also at times, emotion. I also had a vast store of words.

Carmen Sylva, when she discovered that I was writing, instead of laughing at me and being ironical about my modest attempts at literature, encouraged me from the very first in every way. She was getting old, her imagination was running dry and she declared that mine had come just in time to replace hers, which was a generous thing to say. She declared that it was a happy and blessed discovery that I could hold a pen, and no end of kind and enthusiastic things. She spurred me on to write, and each time I had finished a story she immediately wanted to have it so as to translate it into German.

She assured me that, although hers had been rich, I had a larger vocabulary than she ever had, that I saw beauty in a special and particularly intense way, and much else which made me glad and proud, although I knew that Auntie was too easily enthusiastic and not always a keen discernor as to the value of things.

"Child, child!" she used to exclaim. "How do you know so much? I never dreamt that you knew so much!"

Neither had I ever dreamt that I knew so much; I suppose the subconscious within me had continually absorbed those many things I seemed to pass by without noticing: sights, feelings, emotions, pictures, human passions, human joys, human griefs, also a certain philosophy which comes with living. This was all stored up and stirred in me somewhere and came to life when I put pen to paper, and above all there was beauty, so much beauty everywhere, in every form; it was all mine if I could seize it.

At first I imagined that I could write nothing but fairy-tales, that I must continually describe the fantastic, the superhuman, in unreal worlds of imagination: mould picture upon picture out of nothing but beauty. I was moved by a regular thirst for beauty. And yet with it there was always that queer feeling of never being able to take myself seriously which was mine all through my youth and which now still clung to me when I wrote: "I do not want to pretend to know more than I do, to pretend to be anything else than what I am," were the thoughts that hampered my development. "I do not want to show off or to take anything for myself to which I have no real right, nothing by false means, ever. . . . Rather be considered beneath my own value than above it, no pretending, no shams. . . ."

But one day I discovered that I could describe, depict, a landscape, a village, a sunset, a dusty road; that I could with ease conjure up also visions of everyday places, of everyday people; everything picturesque attracted me. I felt the atmosphere, the pathos, that something which lies beneath what is merely seen by the eye, I felt it all, and whilst I wrote I understood that this had come to me little by little through my growing love for my adopted country.

I realized how deeply I had absorbed the beauties, the characteristics, the quaintness peculiar to Roumania, and I knew that I should be able to describe it one day—and that knowledge made me feel strong and rich.

I was still extremely hesitant about what form, what style was going to be mine; the weird had a too great attraction for me, and I was so unlearned, but the visions, pictures, emotions, sensations were all there, lying within me ready to be born.

So I simply went on writing, humbly, without any pretensions, because, having begun I could not lay down my pen. That is all there was about it, an inner urge not to be denied; but strangely enough I felt almost ashamed as though I were somewhat of a fraud . . . a little girl pretending; still that silly fear of taking myself too seriously.

The fear of taking myself too seriously! And suddenly the seriousness of life rose up and was there, not to be denied, not to be put aside; reality, not dreams, dark events which were to overthrow the peace of the world.

But there is still one sunny day I must describe, a day of satisfaction, a festive day:

Constantza, our sea-port; and we were all come together to receive the Tsar and his wife and children, coming from the Crimea to pay old King Carol a visit, come to wipe out the old offence which had so festered since 1877-8; come to accentuate the growing understanding between Russia and Roumania.

In June it was, and all the roses were a-bloom; the Black Sea was blue and the small white town had decked itself in flags and there was a bustling excitement in the usually quiet streets. Flags everywhere, waving from every housetop, from every lamp-post, from every ship, gay new flags full of colour undulating in the breeze against a sky so azure blue that it was as though it had been specially painted for the occasion, a sky for happy days.

We were all assembled on the terrace of Aunty's little house and beneath us along the quay were eager, fussing authorities, guards of honour, many uniforms, military music



and bunting galore ; and Aunt's too long flowing gown was whiter than the foam of the sea.

All my children were there, even little Mircea, and Ileana, always aware of what she owed to the world, arrayed in her best dress, was solemnly prepared to take particular care of Alexis, the little Tsarevitch, who was only a year older than herself.

Uncle showed signs of emotion, for this was a great day for him. No reigning sovereign had visited him since the celebrated coming of Franz Joseph so many years ago.

What may have been his thoughts, looking back upon the long way he had travelled ? An arduous road lay behind him, but he had done good work, he had made his country flourish and it now stood well to the fore, free, no more to be ignored ; he had been patient, consistent, he had shown no weakness ; even if his people did not love him very warmly, they respected him and were conscious of what a good, steady and unselfish leader he had been.

To-day he was evidently pleased and was rather unusually affectionate to me as these were my relations coming to us from over the sea, and he looked to me to be the binding link, to make things comfortable, pleasant. I felt this and was eager to meet him half-way.

And there, painted faintly against the sky-line, the silhouettes of several ships ! We raised our hands to shade our eyes ; yes ! those were the Russian boats ! The movements of the crowd on the quays beneath us became convulsive, the troops lined up straightened themselves instinctively, the old generals pulled down their tunics, smoothed their *grands cordons* and those in black evening garb kept brushing real or imaginary dust from off their sleeves. Everything was emotion and commotion, and a tremor seemed to run even through the flags.

The ships grew in size and from amongst them the Imperial yacht could be clearly distinguished. Nearer and nearer they came ; now they were steaming into the harbour and the bands suddenly struck up the Russian National Anthem, always connected in my mind with my mother, filling me therefore with deep emotion. And then the

*Standard* was close up against the quay, a noble vessel indeed, worthy of bearing an emperor over the blue.

Gangways were lowered and Uncle and Auntie advanced to meet their guests ; Uncle somewhat stiffly with his characteristic slow dignity but almost trembling with emotion, Auntie effusive, charming words of welcome flowing easily from her lips.

They greeted first the Emperor, then the Empress, who was making brave efforts to be as gracious as possible, but it did not come easily to her and her face was very flushed. Her four daughters followed close on her heels, cheerful-looking and exceedingly sunburnt from their stay in the Crimea. We were pleased to see each other again, having become quite friendly during my visit to Tsarskoye. They were very simple girls, ready to enjoy everything, unaffected and natural but not dressed to their advantage, so that the Roumanians, very critical as to looks and clothes, did not much admire them.

Ileana, too small to be conspicuous, was in vain stretching out her little hand to each arrival, but could draw no attention to herself till at last Alexis appeared, upon which she immediately seized hold of him and from then on devoted herself entirely to him, which the very handsome but somewhat spoilt child accepted with perfect good grace. They got on together from the very first, almost without any shyness. Ileana was always eager to make others happy, even as a tiny child.

It was a busy day, every hour mapped out. The weather was beautiful and the population gave an enthusiastic reception to the Imperial guests.

Our round began with a solemn *Te Deum* in the Cathedral, arranged with particular pomp and care, Uncle knowing what a great part church played in the lives of the Russian sovereigns ; the service was celebrated partly in Roumanian and partly in Russian. A drive through the town for the sake of the population and then a military parade, King Carol himself leading past his troops before the Tsar, who was made chief of one of the *Roşiori* regiments. A family lunch at Auntie's pavilion and presentation of authorities.

Then a rest was allowed, both Uncle and the Empress

being in very poor health, but we all met again for tea on the Imperial yacht where the children had a good time together whilst an excellent band was playing.

The day ended with a huge banquet in a hall specially built for the occasion, a snow-white hall in Roumanian style. I had been consulted by the architect and had seen to it that no gaudy gildings should mar the fine lines and proportions, so that the big festive chamber was in excellent taste and there was nothing but roses on the table.

Alix looked very regal that evening; at times she was still very handsome and Uncle and Auntie had specially delegated me to look after her in every way. Knowing how painfully shy she was, I was near at hand during the many presentations, giving her useful hints as to whom the different people were, so that conversation became easier. A *cercle* amongst quite unknown people is always an ordeal and to Alix this part of her duties was specially painful, but my cheerfulness helped her through the evening and prevented a chilly atmosphere. I felt full of the joy of life, and this is often contagious; there is nothing like wanting people to be happy—one finds then a thousand ways.

Sasonov was one of those who had come with the Sovereigns and I believe important political conversations took place; he certainly must have profited by the occasion to promote his schemes. He and Bratianu seemed on very good terms.

Nicky was charming as ever, and I found myself continually watching him and again it struck me how very lovable he was with his low voice and gentle eyes; how little did I imagine then that we would never meet again.

I for one was sad when the hour for parting came and our guests again took possession of their floating abode, which was once and for all to carry them out of our lives.

Again the solemn anthem sounded, again there were cheers but this time mixed with calls of farewell, and slowly a mighty shadow pierced with light, the *Standard* left her moorings to slip away into the night.

I ran along the pier so as to have a last look at the departing ships, for the *Standard* had rejoined her escort of men-of-war which had been anchored before the entry to

the port and all of them were now rapidly steaming away from our shores.

It was a gorgeous night, the heavens a mighty map of stars. For a long time I stood there at the very end of the pier; the ships were now mere specks of light. A lump rose in my throat; the great day was ended, had slipped over into Eternity like so much else. Every sound had died down, there was just a faint swish of the waves and now and again the sound of a bugle, soldiers marching home to their barracks. The night was huge and calm and silent, the ships had now entirely disappeared; like wraiths, populated by wraiths, they had slipped away into the dark. . . .

## Chapter XVIII

### SERAJEVO AND AFTER

THE murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Serajevo on June the 28th came to us, as it did to the rest of the world, as a thunderbolt.

The tension of the month which followed was great. We were all at Sinaia and I had as usual been peacefully planning our yearly visit to Mamma at Tegernsee. Carol was still at Potsdam. Now, of course, all plans had to be laid aside.

A common feeling of anxiety gave us a desire to huddle close together, like animals when they sense that a storm is rising. Uncle especially seemed to need our company, so we met several times a day, not counting the meals which were taken together.

It was lovely weather and Uncle liked to stroll about with us on his terraces or the paths near the castle. He had become very frail and could no longer indulge in the long walks through his beloved forest, which used to be his chief pleasure. Now he stooped somewhat from the shoulders and by the cautious way he moved, it could easily be guessed that he was often in pain.

I vividly remember the anxious expression of his emaciated face which had taken on the colour of old wax, as almost hour for hour he followed up the development of events, and how careworn he looked when he realized that the hope of a peaceful solution of the Austro-Serbian conflicts became less and less.

And then suddenly, exactly a month from the day of the murder at Serajevo, after many fluctuations, the die was cast, and it was war! Austria declared war on Serbia on July the 28th.

We looked at each other aghast, conscious of the terrible

significance of the hour when the world's peace was torn to shreds. The fuse had been lighted; how far would the fire spread?

And the sad thing came to pass that Uncle and I, who had taken so many years to become friends, found ourselves, now from the very first, instinctively and irretrievably in different camps.

War-mentality has something very peculiar about it; the spirit of nationality awakes irresistibly in each man or woman; it is almost impossible to remain even moderately neutral. Only those who are highly philosophical or those whose interest it is to play a double game can remain calm or abstract; but most human beings immediately identify themselves solidly with one side or the other. Patriotism becomes rampant.

Aunty, who for years had almost forgotten her nationality, and who at times had done nothing but boom all that was English or French almost to the detriment of things German, suddenly found herself *die Rheintochter* (daughter of the Rhine) with a vengeance: it was all the time *Deutschland über Alles, Gott mit uns*, and all the rest of it.

I was told that I must look upon the downfall of England as a certainty; that it was Germany's day, the beginning of the Teuton era, they *must* become lords of the world for the good of humanity. She even said a thing very difficult for me to swallow: she declared that England *had* to fall because her women had become immoral!

Where she had got hold of this notion, I cannot say, but I had to hear it again and again, as Aunty was very persistent when she once got an idea into her head. I avoided arguments, though it was very hard not to answer back, and I was determined not to quarrel if I could possibly help it.

Between Uncle and myself the case was sadder. Our friendship and mutual appreciation of each other, slowly cemented through long, difficult years of conflict, had become dear to us and it was for both a deep though never openly pronounced regret that now, at this late hour (we did not know it was the last), our sympathies separated us once more.

Not violently or with unfriendly words ; we were both careful not to hurt each other's feelings, but when he talked and propounded his opinions, he *felt* that I was no more with him. And yet he still had a desire to talk ; he had got into the habit of telling me things, and still had an urge to do so, to teach me, to advise, to instruct. We still came often together and I listened ; but I was mute.

There was also something else ; and that special, almost morbid, faculty I have of feeling for others and understanding their side of questions as well as my own, even when interests clash, made me understand how bitter it must have been for the old King to realize that, whilst he was gradually falling out of sympathy with his people, *I* was becoming their hope : *I*, the unruly little princess he had educated with such pains, was to-day the country's hope !

To-day nearly the whole of Roumania was straining towards the Entente, away from the Triple Alliance, but Uncle still believed that the good of his country was in the old allegiance.

My husband, always the old King's most loyal follower, his most patient and obedient heir, was a closed book to his people : no one knew what he felt, he never raised his voice, never expressed himself ; but the very blood that ran in my veins was a guarantee that I felt as Roumania felt.

I look upon this as a supreme favour of Fate. Even to this day I feel like falling on my knees and thanking God for that stupendous stroke of luck. At the Great Hour my country and I were one.

This might so easily have been otherwise, and, passionate as I am, how should I have stood a conflict which would have torn me in two, a conflict which King Ferdinand had later to face ? This remains an unanswered question ; luckily it never needed an answer !

All through life I have instinctively believed in my good star, and now at this crucial hour Providence, in her mercy, decreed that Roumania and I should stand for the same thing !

There are some words of Nietzsche's which come to my

mind when I think back upon all this, and I cannot resist quoting them here ; some will perhaps understand me.

I love the one who is ashamed to see the die fall in his favour and who then asks of himself : perchance might I be a cheat ?

No, I was no cheat, but luck had favoured me beyond my deserts !

Austria had declared war on Serbia on July the 28th, and Germany and France opened hostilities on the 1st-2nd of August, although there was no actual declaration of war. On the 2nd of August Italy declared her neutrality, and it now became urgent for Roumania to take a stand herself, as her allies were impatient and disagreeably pressing ; telegrams were flying backwards and forwards between Berlin, Vienna and Bucarest, so on August the 3rd King Carol called together a Crown Council at Sinaia with all the responsible representatives of both parties, the Liberals (in power) and the Conservatives, so as to consult with them as to what attitude our country should take. The Crown Prince was of course present.

This was a tragic and memorable sitting. Uncle, true to his allegiance, in spite of the slights he had suffered at the hands of his allies, was ready to see Roumania enter in on the side of Austria and Germany, although he had no absolute obligation, his treaty being only a defensive one. But Uncle was convinced that Roumania's chance was on the side of the Central Powers and stuck to this, although Italy had already backed out on the pretext that she had not been consulted and was therefore liberated from her obligations, and Roumania's case was the same.

To make his attitude clear it must be understood that Uncle had blind confidence in the German army's superiority over every other army. He never had much belief in the French and imagined that the Germans would continue to advance with lightning rapidity, sweeping all before them ; that it would, in fact, be a repetition of 1870. He therefore had visions of Roumania sharing in an overwhelming German victory and this explains why he desired Roumania to declare herself from the first for the Central Powers.



My husband, I believe, was of the same opinion, but he told me nothing ; Nando could be exceedingly silent, and, unlike most women, I never tried to find out those things men did not wish to share with their wives.

Poor old Uncle, it seems, stood up with all his well-known authority, unshakably loyal to the politics he had always followed, full of a passionate desire for his country's welfare ; now a frail, suffering old gentleman, but a soldier still, accustomed to be a leader, accustomed to have his word listened to. But to-day he could not move those who sat round the same table with him ; he remained alone with his convictions ; they listened, but were mostly hostile to his urging and out of sympathy with his desires. Only one, Peter Carp, of all his political men, the one with whom he had always been least in sympathy, was heart and soul with him about entering immediately into war on the side of the Germans. Bratianu and his party opposed this and most virulent in their protest were Take Ionescu and his followers.

Poor old Auntie passed through terrible anxiety whilst her ailing husband sat through that harrowing council. Though she hated war, she saw eye to eye with him as to his belief in Germany's omnipotence.

I found her pacing the Peleş corridors, up and down, over the soft red carpets, like a great animal in a cage. She swept me along with her and talked and talked incessantly. I was silent, but my heart was beating as much as hers in excruciating anxiety. Although I knew the country's pulse, the issue was still uncertain and it was incredibly painful to be pacing thus arm in arm with Auntie, each of us with a separate fear or hope in our hearts.

Roumania was to remain neutral ! This was the result of the conference. When the result was known and Uncle had come out of it a broken and saddened man, Auntie, of course, became dramatic, and, as was her way, almost revelled in the grand tragedy of the situation : the old King denied by his people after a long life of hard work for his country.

Legend will have it that Uncle died of a broken heart. I do not know if hearts actually break, but it was certainly

tragic that he should be at odds with his people at the last, and I really believe that this grief hastened his end.

The following months were sad for us all, and heavy with unexpressed emotions throbbing beneath the outward calm of our Sinaia life.

The tremendous events taking place in Serbia, France, Belgium, Russia and Germany were followed up by everyone with excruciating anxiety, and the cruel strain of contrary currents could be felt in all things beneath the outward harmony of our official existence. Each man was hugging to himself his own hopes and fears, accepting as truth all news most in keeping with his sympathies. What was triumph to the one was grief to the other, but we managed to discuss things with outward calm so as not to hurt each other's feelings too much.

Only Aunt, accustomed to argue on all subjects, could not leave well alone and tried our nerves by stirring up dogs best left sleeping. Her conversation at lunch was not always tactful. She kept loudly proclaiming that Uncle ought to shake the dust of this ungrateful country from his feet and go and rest in peace far from all conflict. Uncle visibly writhed under the things she said during meals, as all ears were more than ever keenly open. Underlying passions could only be kept dormant with superlative tact on all sides and a mutual desire to be gentle and kind to each other, no matter if our sympathies were running along in divided channels.

But this notion that perhaps Uncle meant to abdicate had taken root and sent a shudder through the country, which was afraid to lose its dynasty at the crucial hour.

I was not initiated into what was actually being discussed between uncle and nephew, and I was one of those whose anxiety was most poignant.

I have just proclaimed that I had no feminine curiosity and that I never tried to make my husband speak when he desired to be dumb, but this was not only a political question, it meant our very existence. What understanding had the King and Crown Prince which I was not to know?

If Uncle abdicated, would he persuade my husband to do the same? Would it mean that, after the long, difficult,

sometimes even bitter, years of hard work and education, now that my life, interests and loyalty had really sent roots deep down into Roumanian soil, I was to be torn away just at the hour when our people might really need me? How could I to-day stand this awful fear without trying to make my husband confess if he had made any fatal promise?

But he was dumb, cruelly dumb; nothing would induce him to give me a hint about what secret understanding he had with his uncle, of what they were preparing for us, over our heads, without consulting our feelings or allowing us to raise any protest.

I felt a deep current of anxiety stirring around us: people began to come to me, trying to find out what was going on. Finally, unable to stand the strain, I sent for Prince Stirbey, now in old Kalinderu's place, and asked him if he knew anything definite.

No, he had not been told nor consulted: he, too, was anxious, but he could neither confirm nor abate my fears.

So as to give a better idea than anything I could write to-day of the feelings which tortured me then, I here copy a page out of my book, "*From my Heart to Theirs*," written at that time but never published, which is this:

My love for this Country that I had made mine through sighs and tears has become as a religion to me.

I feel bound to it by chains of steel, bound by heart and brain and blood. I feel that every one of the six children I have borne to it are so many links of this chain that death only or catastrophe can break.

I remember how one day I was riding with my second son, a small boy with fair hair and keen, happy eyes, the colour of the sky. He was astride a snow-white pony, a turbulent, fiery little creature which bounded along before me like a stag.

We were galloping over some wide, flower-strewn meadows, in places peasants were mowing the hay and its fragrance mounted like incense into the balmy air; as a background, mountains, grand, silent, eternal in their beauty.

I pulled up my horse to watch the child circle hither and thither on his pony whose long tail swept like a puff of smoke over the grass.

It was at the beginning of the great European war and there had been talk of the old King's abdication owing to some vital divergence of opinion between himself and his people, and it had been whispered that we, the younger generation whose lives still lay before us, would have to follow him into exile if he decided to leave. My

whole being was up in arms against such a thought, all the fighter within me was prepared to frustrate this plan.

What! Be obliged to leave this country which had become mine at last, into whose heart I had so slowly but surely crept? What! Leave this people who were beginning to trust me and to look upon me as their dawning hope: leave my work, my future, the sacred right of being buried in Roumanian ground? Oh! never, never! Such a thing must not be!

And gazing at the bold little rider on his snow-white pony, I knew that I had borne him with the thought that he belonged to this country and this country to him.

The joy of life running through him which made him throw back his head and laugh to the heavens above, was in intimate connexion with the fields and mountains, with the forests, plains and rivers of this land which was his. Every drop of blood in his veins linked him to the ground over which he was galloping; he could never be at home in any other country; this was his heritage, his right. . . .

And I knew at that moment, knew it with a rock-like certainty, that, even if others could be persuaded to leave, I for one would cling to this soil with my children, and to tear us from it would be to tear the hearts out of our bodies.

People sensed that this was my feeling and one day old Mr. Costinescu, one of the important Liberal leaders, came to implore me not to allow anybody or anything to separate me from this country, no matter what others might decide: "Even if the Prince, your husband, feels bound to follow his uncle into self-imposed exile, promise that you will remain with us with your son Carol, if possible with all your children, remain to carry on the work begun by the old King; it is not possible nor fair that you should forsake us at this crisis when we know you are with us with all your heart. . . ."

And of course I promised. Filled by an almost painful fervour I promised that nothing would induce me to abandon my people as long as they needed me, no, not even if it would mean the tearing asunder of family ties.

At that period, all things were pressing in upon me with overwhelming intensity. I was terribly awake to the times. A thousand forces were stirring within me, I seemed to be newly and tremendously alive and a great desire to live up to my possibilities, never yet put to the test, was born within me.

In the same unpublished book I find this passage characteristic of my emotions of that time, when I felt my strength growing, so I copy out my own words, as to-day I could

hardly find that same enthusiasm or that blind urge impelling me towards life, towards the fulfilment of my own possibilities which was mounting as a strong tide within me and which would enable me to face any fate. I wrote thus :

It is strange how the human soul gradually accepts the changes and transformations life imposes upon us.

The strong go forward, permitting no regrets, no recriminations, no remorse to hinder their advance.

Each succeeding year tears from me some desire, some belief, some hopeful illusion, but in shedding much which was dear, an inner strength grows within me and becomes as a shield protecting me against sudden events.

At heart I am lonely ; not my life, not my days are lonely, but my soul, that something which makes of me a separate identity. I think that most human beings are lonely, but those whose will does not easily bend to the laws of others are lonelier still.

I feel as though I belong to the strong of this world and I know that I am ready to face both myself and Fate.

I came as a child to this country, a foolish, pliable, clinging, credulous innocent, believing solely in my right to happiness, but life took hold of me and stood me on my feet ; it buffeted, mocked and derided me, obliging me to fight my own battles, forcing me to stand upright and alone to make my own laws according to the depth of my own conscience ; and at times these laws were at variance with the laws of those who had power over me.

Like all world-wanderers, I have outwardly to submit to each day's tyranny, but inwardly I have become what I wish to be. No one and nothing can turn me from the ideal which gives me strength nor from the faith which makes me forgive Life and the uncharitableness of my neighbour.

Love lives in my heart, invincibly, a light nothing can obscure, neither disappointment nor disillusionment, nor even the mistrust and misunderstanding of mankind. The inner faith by which I go forward is stronger than all else ; invincible, invulnerable, not to be overthrown ; it has become an armour which protects me from the snares of existence.

And because of this Faith, this Belief, all those who really count in my life, give me the best which they have to give.

The light of my Faith leads them, they are glad to follow me, they are glad to be mine.

No heart-rending experience, no conflict, no defeat, no surrender leaves any bitterness in my soul. All that I have endured, submitted to, all that has either gladdened or saddened my days seems but to strengthen that light, nor do I ever feel any desire to hit back at those who harm me, my one and only wish is that they should understand the sad unfruitfulness of all hate.

I do not look despisingly upon the girl I once was, but I rejoice over the armour she has grown over her weakness, nor do I regret any single trial which came to her along the way ; all her dead dreams, all her falls, all her tears and yearning have helped to build up the woman she is to-day.

Yes, I am lonely, but with the loneliness and the pride of the strong, of those who would rather lead than follow !

What a youthful ring of arrogance there is in this confession ! To-day I would never dare write such words, but strength had come with the growing confidence of my people, and I felt this strength and rejoiced over it, as the young warrior rejoices over his sword. I felt prepared for all that would be asked of me, equipped for the battle that lay before me ; I was not afraid—on the contrary, a strange elation possessed me and with it the certainty that I was ready for the great call that was coming, for it *was* coming ; I felt it in every drop of my blood ; only, I did not know that it was to come so soon !

The battle of the Marne was a terrible blow to Uncle, it shook his most precious beliefs. He stood aghast before this unexpected turn of events ; as a German he was overwhelmed, but as a soldier he was keenly interested in this great war-game so different from any he had known in his day. In spite of personal sympathies, he could detach himself enough to discuss events with quiet objectivity, and conversation at meals was therefore both animated and interesting and not at all one-sided.

I remember how one day at lunch Auntie was becoming lyrical over the horror of the world in general and how in her uncomfortably poetic exuberance she began proclaiming loudly that we should all join hands and in a mighty circle sail up to Heaven, away from the miseries of this darkened sphere.

Uncle grunted his royal disapproval with his usual “*Das ist Unsinn, Elisabeth,*” the words we so often heard when he wanted to damp the old Queen’s effusiveness. “Nonsense, I have no desire to leave this earth, at present I am far too interested as to the outcome of the War, I want to see the end,” and turning to me he added : “With this new

development things have taken, I am afraid we cannot hope for peace before Christmas."

Before Christmas . . . and there were to be four Christmases before we saw peace . . . but there was to be no Christmas for Uncle any more.

Nor was Uncle destined to see how the War ended, however interested he might be! Uncle died in the night of the 9th to the 10th of October, quite suddenly in his bed.

It happened that my husband and I were absent from Sinaia just that very night, a rare occurrence, as we seldom went to town at that season. But it had been considered good policy that the Prince and I should show ourselves in Bucarest so that, with our appearance in the capital, the rumours that we were all going away should be denied.

It had been found advisable that we should be present at the autumn races, where the public with its thousand eyes could see that we were both there in flesh and blood.

Nando was to spend the night at Cotroceni, but I had promised to go and sup with Marthe Bibescu at Mogoșoaia and sleep in her house, returning only next morning with my husband to Sinaia.

Early on the morning of the 10th Prince Stirbey called me to the telephone to tell me that I was Queen. . . .

I have often been asked since, what were my emotions when this event took place, and each time I answered with perfect truthfulness that it was one of the most tremendous and overwhelming emotions of my life.

I had always faced the fact that, sooner or later, inevitably this must come about; mentally I had been preparing myself for it, but when it actually came it was a colossal shock.

I was quite conscious of what an enormous responsibility it meant, especially because of the times we were living in and of the extreme seriousness of the general situation in Europe, and our country in particular. We were facing a new political era, and every move, every decision would be of paramount importance.

It was a solemn moment, but I felt no fear although it was as though suddenly a new door had opened upon life. We were standing on the threshold; what should we find beyond?

I was the same woman as yesterday, but to-morrow was separated from yesterday as with the stroke of a sword ; there would never be any going back, no shelter could be found, we were out in the glaring light. Something had died, but in that dying something else had come to life ; a colossal responsibility but also colossal possibilities if we were equal to our task, if we were strong enough to grasp the day which was coming. And on a golden bowl I gave my husband at that time I had these words inscribed : "To-morrow may be thine if thy hand be strong enough to grasp it."

Yes, it was thus I felt at that hour, and when I knelt beside the old King's bed and gazed for the last time upon his face, scarcely paler than it had been during the last few weeks of his life, so unchanged and yet so calm, so nobly aloof in his new-found, well-earned rest, I felt as though with mute lips I must take my vows before his great silence.

"Have no fear, Uncle, we shall bravely carry on. Your hand was heavy, often you tortured my youth, but according to your lights you were fair and just. I shall not forget the lessons you taught me although I was so slow about learning and growing up ; and here, kneeling beside you, though to-day you are dumb and have no more orders to give me, I feel that you still have a message for me, your once so troublesome niece : yes, Uncle, I shall try to be, as you were, faithful unto death, loving your country as you did for so many long years. If God wills, bravely and fearlessly we shall carry on your work.—Amen."

Aunty, seated in a chair at her husband's side, all draped in black and surrounded by many weeping ladies, was more full of words than ever. Over and over again she related how he had died quite suddenly in her arms, and she, groping in the dark, not able to find the switch to put on the light. A wonderful death for him, but for her a fearful shock.

My children were grouped around her and Nando held her hand, but Uncle was quite silent, his day was done.

All the details belonging to this time, although deeply engraved on my memory, are too trivial to relate at length.



I prefer quoting a passage out of my book written at the time ; it sums up everything in a single picture and better than any other words recaptures the spirit of the day. This is what I wrote :

In turning over the last of these pages, I enclose within them the days of my youth.

Days of struggle, days of illusion, days of disappointment, days of reparation, days of doubting, days of recommencement, days of love, days of revolt . . . days of my youth.

Days of storm or of sunshine, days of accomplishment which sometimes came too late. Days rich with possibilities, days made heavy by fear and doubt, days full of sunshine, flowers and hope, days pulsing with joy or pain, days full to the brim, warm, marvellous, teeming with life and energy . . . days of my youth.

Days when I trembled and days when I laughed, days when all things seemed possible, days when every step was an effort but also days when my feet flew as though winged over the earth. . . . Days of my youth. . . .

And here is a picture which has remained for ever engraved upon my heart.

That morning I had become Queen, Queen of a people who had learnt to understand me little by little : Queen at a moment when the whole of Europe was on fire and flames were licking our every frontier. I was Queen ; a new and fearful page was opening before me, solemn with unknown possibilities, heavy with unknown fears.

We were standing in Parliament, the new King was taking his oath before his people. The old master had passed away and the new one with all his hopes and theirs stood before them on the brink of a new life ; he was neither loved nor unloved, he was a closed book ; no one knew his thoughts, but he might be as the dawn of something greater, might become the fulfiller of a long-dreamed-of dream.

I stood somewhat apart, with my children around me, a long black mourning veil covering my face. My heart-beats were as the feet of Fate.

I hardly heard the King's voice, nor his words, but I heard how they acclaimed him, their King of to-morrow, a long thunder of applause rolled round the walls.

Then suddenly my name ran through space :

"Regina Maria. . . ."

“Regina Maria. . . .”

And there was something in the way they called out my name that had within it a sound of hope.

“Regina Maria ! . . .”

I suddenly felt that I must bare my face before the whole house, that I must turn towards them with no veil of mourning between them and myself.

A great clamour mounted to the vault above, something long drawn out and tremendous that came irresistibly from many hearts !

“Regina Maria !”

And we faced each other then, my people and I.

And that was *my* hour—mine—an hour it is not given to many to live ; for at that moment it was not only an idea, not only a tradition or a symbol they were acclaiming, but a woman ; a woman they loved.

And at that hour I knew that I had won, that the stranger, the girl who had come from over the seas, was a stranger no more ; I was theirs with every drop of my blood !

Disappointment, sorrow, misfortune might follow, for are we not all in the hands of God ? But that hour when we stood looking into each other's eyes, all their many faces turned towards my face, was my hour, and it is therefore upon this vision that I want to close this book, the vision of my people turning towards me as though I were their supremest hope. . . .

MARIE.

COTROCENI,  
*November, 1933.*



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